

आधुनिक भारत के निर्माता BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA आधुनिक  
भारतेर अष्टा आधुनिक भारतेर निर्माता आधुनिक भारतना धर्वेया एक्स  
फॉटो निमांडक आधुनिक भारतचे शिल्पकार आधुनिक भारतेर  
निर्माता

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निर्माता

BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

# Dhondo Keshav Karve

G.L.Chandavarkar

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नव भारत निर्माता के मुमार ज़دید हिन्दूस्तान के मुमार  
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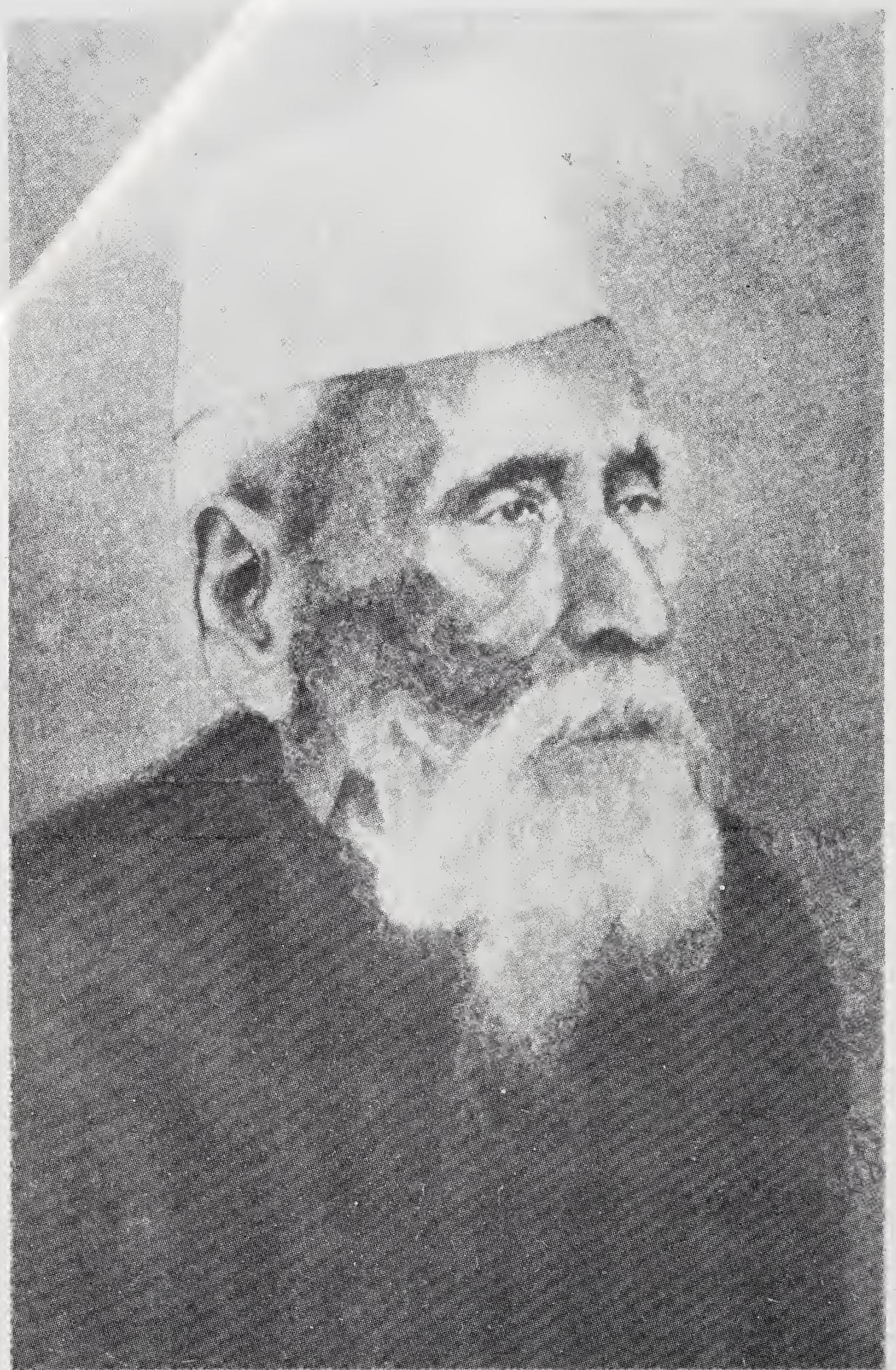




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**DHONDO KESHAV KARVE**



*Builders of Modern India*

# DHONDO KESHAV KARVE

G.L. CHANDAVARKAR



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## **ABOUT THE SERIES**

The object of the Series is the publication of biographies of those eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the struggle for independence.

It is essential for the present and coming generations to know something about these great men and women. Except in a few cases, no authoritative biographies are available. The Series has been planned to remove this lacuna and comprises handy volumes containing simple and short biographies of our eminent leaders written by competent persons who know their subject well. The books in this Series are of 200 to 300 pages each and are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace more elaborate biographies.

Though desirable, it may not be possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to persons who are well equipped to do so and, therefore, for practical reasons, it is possible that there might be no historical sequence observed. It is hoped, however, that within a short period, all eminent national personalities will figure in this Series.



## PREFACE

The figure of Dhondo Keshav Karve stands out on the scene of social reform activity in India.

He belonged to a race of giants, but unlike most of them who began at the top with lofty ideas, public utterances and writings, which led to an awakening among the people, and mighty plans which acquired wide publicity and recognition, Karve began with the smallest of beginnings—himself.

His work in the field of social reform, which was mainly for the cause of the emancipation of women, began with his second marriage to a widow after the death of his first wife. The urge for this step came from his own thinking, musings on the plight of widows—which he saw in his own family and around him. It was at the bidding of his own tender and bleeding heart that he conceived the idea and the ideal of dedicating his life to the cause of the widows first and later to that of the education of women.

There was hardly anything in him as a boy or as a student that was conspicuous. All that he remembered about his boyhood and youth was his timidity, and he always cursed himself for that shortcoming.

From his simplicity and diffidence, from an early struggle, and from the sufferings which filled his life as a youth, emanated a desire, intense and irresistible, to seek compensation for his own deficiencies, as he looked upon some of the features of his character, to do good always, everywhere and to anyone he came across.

Physically, he was small and frail, but within that physical frame, there was a soul that was mighty, a soul that gave his character an immovable structure, a soul that refused to regard any achievement or accomplishment as the end of his endeavours. Almost to the end of his long life, his mind retained a freshness of outlook and energy and a desire to do something for his fellowmen. Even as he stood on the threshold of a century, he was conceiving new schemes and projects of social service.

One feature of the uniqueness of Maharshi Karve's life—an incidental one, which could hardly be associated with the greatness of his work and character, although it did give them an additional lustre—was that he lived to witness the centenary of his birth and lived for four more years. Almost the whole of that life of a hundred years and four was spent for others. It was filled with hardships that had to be suffered, with difficulties that had to be overcome, with tasks that had to be performed against heavy odds. All this he did with equanimity, and he endured more with the same mental composure. The re-naming of the township of Hingne founded by him as Karvenagar, the doctorates conferred on him by one university after another, the award of Bharat Ratna which symbolised the highest tribute which his country and its government could pay him, the seat which his own work and the gratitude of his countrywomen and countrymen prepared for him among India's immortals—none of these disturbed his own estimate of himself as a humble servant of humanity.

All that Karve knew was to give; all that he asked for was for his mission; and he received nothing for himself.

It was my good fortune to have been asked to write a biography of Maharshi Karve during his lifetime. It was written for the Dr. D.K. Karve Centenary Committee on the occasion of his birth centenary, and the publication of the

book was announced by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at the Centenary function which was held at the Brabourne Stadium on April 18, 1958. In my task of writing the book, I was able to draw inspiration from his presence and his personality and the talks I had with him on two or three occasions.

When I was asked by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, to take up the task once again, I gladly accepted it in view of the spiritual elevation I would have once again from association with the life and endeavours of the man, whose greatness had—and still has—the magic of imparting a portion of it to others, and also because of the opportunity I would have—four years after his departure from this world—of reviewing his life in its fulness.

Inevitably, I borrowed a good deal of the material from my first attempt, without losing sight of the necessity of subjecting it to re-thinking and re-telling. I was myself surprised at the fresh delight and spiritual benefit I derived from the writing (or re-writing) of each chapter for this book without experiencing the least boredom of repetition.

In making use of the material from my first book, I had to ask the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University, to whom all the rights of the publication belonged, to allow me to borrow it for this book. The Syndicate of the S.N.D. Thackersey Women's University was gracious enough to grant my request. I acknowledge this act of kindness with profound gratitude.

In my present effort, as in the first one, I had all the help I needed from Bhaskarrao Karve, who from time to time, made available for me fresh material, particularly about the closing years of his father's life. The same help I had from Seetabai Annegiri. I owe to them both a deep debt of gratitude.

Mr. S. Natarajan's *A Hundred Years of Social Reform in India* gave me much useful material, especially for chapter five of this book. To the book and its author, I acknowledge my indebtedness. I have also found the speeches and writings of the late Sir Narayan Chandavarkar on social reform very useful in the preparation of the background for this chapter.

Maharshi Karve's autobiography in Marathi and also his reminiscences in English, which appeared as a book with the title *Looking Back*, have been my main source of information. I would be failing in my sense of gratitude if I did not mention that I have borrowed a number of passages and extracts from these two books and also from another pamphlet written by Maharshi Karve.

To the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, I owe thanks, which I cannot express adequately in words, for the opportunity they gave me to live once again in close communion with the dedicated life of that servant of humanity whose personality, in every sense, has become symbolic of the genius and traditions of India.

G.L. Chandavarkar

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## Karves of Murud

The little town of Murud was astir with excitement. Large numbers of Brahmins had gathered in the market place to go to the house which was the temporary residence of the representative of Maharaja Gaikwad of Baroda. He had come on behalf of his master to distribute *dakshina*<sup>1</sup> to Brahmins.

They went to the house. It was buzzing with activity. Each one of them came out with a *dakshina* of ten rupees and with a heart overflowing with joy.

Bhiku and Dhondu, two brothers, were playing in the open space in front of their small house. Bhiku was five years older and had his *upanayan*<sup>2</sup> performed.

One of their friends came running.

“Did you hear this, Bhiku? The Maharaja is distributing *dakshina* to Brahmins. Look at them. How happy they are! Each one of them has got ten rupees.”

“Ten rupees!” Bhiku exclaimed, “It can’t be true.”

“My uncle told me so. How do you say that it can’t be true?”

“Does everyone get the *dakshina*?” Bhiku asked.

“Everyone who has his *upanayan* performed,” was the reply. “Why don’t you too go, Bhiku? You’ll surely come back with ten rupees.”

---

1. *dakshina* : gift given to a Brahmin at a religious ceremony or in recognition of his learning.

2. *upanayan*: investiture with the sacred thread—a religious ceremony by which a boy is initiated and sent to the teacher for education.

Bhiku began to wonder. Why should he not also go? After a few seconds, he ran inside. He went to the kitchen where his mother was cooking.

“Mother,” Bhiku cried, “come out and see. The Brahmins are receiving *dakshina* from a rich man. Fancy each one getting ten rupees !”

“I know all about it, Bhiku,” said his mother, “Now, go out and play, and don’t disturb me in my work.”

“But, mother,” asked Bhiku, “why shouldn’t I get the *dakshina*? They say that anyone who performs *sandhya*<sup>1</sup> is entitled to receive the gift. I too can get it if I go.”

“My child, it is not proper for us to beg,” replied the mother.

“Beg?” said Bhiku, “We don’t have to beg !”

“The Maharaja is giving *dakshina* and those who receive it are but supplicants.”

“Mother, don’t you see that so many Brahmins are receiving the *dakshina* ?”

“We are not like them,” the mother said in a firm voice.

“Bhiku, my boy, you are born in the highly respected family of Karves. Your forefathers were highly placed and were renowned for their great wealth. Your father is not rich today, but he was at one time. We have fallen on bad days. We have, however, not lost our family prestige, nor can we ever forget the family pride. Your maternal uncle, who is a *dasha-granthi*<sup>2</sup> Brahmin, never stoops to receive a *dakshina*.”

“But, mother, the man who is distributing the *dakshina* is not an ordinary person. He’s a Maharaja—the Maharaja of

---

1. *sandhya*: daily worship performed by a Brahmin in the morning, at noon and in the evening.

2. *dasha-granthi*: a Brahmin who has studied the ten great religious treatises.

Baroda!" Bhiku felt sure that his mother would have nothing to say on this, but the proud woman retorted with dignity:

"Yes, he's a Maharaja and he belongs to a family of rulers who not long ago were debtors of the Karves. The Maharaja owes to your family lakhs of rupees! which are yet to be repaid."

Bhiku was astonished to hear this. He was sorely disappointed. He could not help feeling that his father, who was at Koregaon at the time, would surely have allowed him to go and receive the *dakshina*. Kesopant returned the next day. When he was told of what had happened, he consoled his son by telling him that what his mother had said was right. Kesopant felt proud of his wife's dignified decision.

Dhondu, the younger boy, heard and saw all this. He registered it carefully in his mind.

Poona was the seat of government of the Marathas under the Peshwas. It, therefore, attracted men of enterprise from all quarters and especially from the Konkan. Among these were two brothers, Keshavbhat Karve and his younger brother, Raghunathbhat Karve. They opened a shop in Poona and soon began to prosper in their business and established their reputation. The Peshwas themselves were among their customers. Keshavbhat was highly respected for his learning and had received from the Peshwas the gift of a village of the name of Hatnor. He was an *agnihotri*<sup>1</sup> and was invited to officiate at religious ceremonies. Raghunathbhat was, more practical and was very clever in business. He managed the business almost by himself, but so great was his loyalty to his elder brother that he ran the shop in his name. By their honesty and industry, they amassed a large fortune. They and their

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1. *agnihotri*: a Brahmin who maintains the sacred fire in his house by offering oblations to it regularly.

two partners had advanced a loan of six and a half lakhs of rupees to the Maratha chief, Damaji Gaikwad. There is also a record of another loan given by them to another Maratha chief, Janoji Bhosla of Nagpur.

A large property was purchased by the two Karve brothers at Murud, their home town, and there they built a spacious mansion for their family. The village tank which cost Rs. 6,500 and the temple of Durgadevi, the pride of Murud, were their gifts to the town. Bapunana, Raghunathbhat's youngest son, was the grandfather of Dhondo Keshav Karve. During his time, there was a decline in the fortunes of the family.

Kesopant, father of Dhondo Keshav, had seen something of the family's prosperity in his childhood. He had also inherited and imbibed the aristocratic traits of the family but, unlike his elder brother, he found no difficulty in adapting himself to the declining fortunes. He took up a job as manager of the estate of a rich family of the name of Barve in the neighbouring village of Koregaon.

Kesopant Karve's wife, Lakshmibai, was the daughter of Kesopant Paranjpye of Sheraoli. The outward pomp of the Karves of Murud still lingered at the time of Kesopant's marriage, but the young bride did not take long to realise that things were actually different. Nor was she slow in reconciling herself to the real state of affairs. To her husband who had made up his mind to put up a brave fight against poverty, she gave full and loyal co-operation. Kesopant lived alone at Koregaon. He saved whatever he could from his petty income of twenty-five rupees a year. This income and what little he could get from the piece of land at Murud enabled him, on account of his frugal habits, to pay off the family debt before long. Lakshmibai lived at Sheraoli and there she became the

most useful member of a large household. In a few years they were not only free from all liabilities but were able to have a small house of their own at Murud. This house cost Kesopant four hundred rupees. When Bhiku and Dhondu, two sons, and daughter Amba were of school-going age, Kesopant's wife moved with the children to this new house at Murud. She had six children, but the first three had died, one after another, in infancy. Poverty and sorrow combined to give Kesopant and his wife a severe training. With brave hearts and with remarkable skill, they created happiness for themselves and their three children inspite of hardships and the very slender means they had. As the children grew up, the household had more comforts, but the old habits of industry and economy were never given up. Even the children became accustomed to hard work and to austere living. In the midst of their hardships and difficulties, the pride of the Karves continued to burn like a flame in the hearts of Kesopant and Lakshmibai. They passed it on to their children.

Dhondo Keshav Karve was born of such parents on *Vaishakh Shuddh 5, Shak* 1780, which was April 18, 1858. He regarded himself as singularly fortunate in having been born of parents whose character and behavior left a permanent mark on him and on his brother Bhiku, whom he called Dada, and his sister, Amba. Kesopant was a man of very quiet temperament but resolute and relentless in his attitude towards life. His wife was an ideal Hindu woman and had certain qualities which are rarely found even in a woman known to possess the best traits of Hindu character. At a Hindu wedding there is none more highly respected than the bridegroom's mother. On the occasion of Dhondu's wedding, his mother so laid aside her honoured position that she pleaded guilty to the bride's people for a small omission and even suffered the penance of striking her cheeks with her own hand.

The year 1858 A.D. is a memorable one in the history of India. The process of building up and consolidating what came to be known as British India was completed in that year. It was the result of the establishment of one government, one administration and a uniform modern system of education in the country. It was in this year that, on the morrow of the momentous happenings of 1857, Lord Canning, the Governor General and first Viceroy, made the declaration so full of portents of the years to come:

“I will not govern in anger. Justice, and that (too) as stern, inflexible as law and might can make it, I will deal out. But I will never allow an angry and indiscriminate act or word to proceed from the Government so long as I am responsible for it.”

The Queen’s Proclamation of November 1, 1858, proved that these were not empty words. With 1858, therefore, began a new era, with a new policy which can be expressed in no better words than the following with which the Proclamation concluded:

“In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment and in their gratitude, our best reward.”

As Professor Rushbrook Williams has observed, “After 1857 the position by slow degrees reversed. The demand for progress arose not from Government but from the people.”

As the nineteenth century came to a close, it became evident that even though the uprising of 1857 was a failure, it had left a deep impression upon the situation in the country and, indeed, had so influenced the course of events that educated Indians increasingly began to realise that their future lay more or less in their own hands. They also realised that although the British were aliens, they need not be looked upon as political adversaries. They had brought with them a new

outlook and fresh ideas which were spreading among the people they ruled. If rightly used, these invaluable assets may prove successful in winning freedom for their country. Not without a prophetic vision did Sir Charles Metcalfe express his hope—or was it his fear?—“I expect to wake up one fine day and find India lost to the English Crown.” That fine day did dawn ninety years later. These ninety years comprise one of the most remarkable periods of Indian history for they produced men who built institutions and shaped events to give to the country her freedom for which the price of strenuous effort and immeasurable sacrifice had to be paid. The year 1858 and its two immediate predecessors gave birth to events of national importance and they also brought forth men who led their countrymen on the new paths, they cut out. Among the men so brought forth was one who marched through the long and momentous years with the torch-light of reform in one hand and with the alms-bowl in the other. He belonged to that group of pioneers of the early days who felt the urge for reform from within. The year 1858 is noted in India’s history for another event, no less significant, the birth of the emancipator of Indian womanhood, Dhondo Keshav Karve, who first saw the light of day on April 18 of that year.

Although Professor Dhondo Keshav Karve was born at Sheraoli in the house of his maternal grandfather, he looked upon Murud as his home town. He has described Murud in his autobiography as one of the few healthy spots on the south Konkan coast. The same town produced during the last century other prominent men who have left behind the impact of their lives and character on the happenings, of the last hundred years. Foremost among them was Rao Bahadur Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik. He was a lawyer of the first rank and served the Bombay Municipality for many years with distinction. He was also the first Indian to be nominated as a member of

the Governor General's Legislative Council. Vaman Abaji Modak was another son of Murud who brought glory to his home town. He belonged to the first batch of graduates of the University of Bombay which also included Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, the oriental scholar of international renown, and Mahadev Govind Ranade, pioneer of the social reform movement in the country. Mr. Modak was an eminent educationist and had the distinction of being the first Indian principal of the Elphinstone High School, a Government institution in Bombay. Professor Karve cherished with pride the memories of these and other prominent persons who belonged to Murud.

“I won't eat unless you give me what I want.”

“Dhondu,” said his mother, “Don't be naughty. I'll give you grains of *kadwa*<sup>1</sup>, nicely fried, tomorrow. Don't you see how busy I am, just now?”

“No, no, that won't do.” Dhondu was adamant. “I must have them or.....”

“Very well, take these and please yourself.” His mother took a few grains and, putting them into a spoon, held it over the fire for a few seconds. The grains were just half-fried, but Dhondu was quite satisfied.

The tender hearts of Dhondu's mother and father were full of affection for their children. They hardly spoke a harsh word to Dada, Dhondu or Amba and the three children also rarely gave them cause for being harsh. Dhondu at times was naughty when he did not get what he wanted. His mother did her best to please him. When he did not listen to her, Atmya's help was sought. Atmya was an old servant. He alone could make the children behave.

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1. *Kadwa*—a kind of pulse

Dhondu learnt his alphabet at Shenvi Pantoji's School.

"The school was held both in the morning and in the afternoon. It was held in a temple that began its work at sunrise. The first thing to do was to repeat in chorus religious morning songs known as *bhoopalis*. While this was being done, all the boys had to run their dry pens lightly over the letters of model writing sheets known as Kittas (कित्ते) written by experts in handwriting."<sup>1</sup>

Instead of slates they had smooth wooden boards. A thin layer of fine dust was spread over the board and a wooden pen with a blunt end was used to write upon it. In this school he cultivated the habit of learning by heart and reciting loudly and with a faultless accent verses from the works of mediaeval poets—*aryas*<sup>2</sup>, *shlokas*<sup>3</sup> and *bhoopalis*<sup>4</sup>.

His clear and sweet voice made him popular in the school. This talent was probably one of the factors which attracted the attention of teachers like Mr. Vinayak Lakshman Soman of the Government Primary School of Murud which Dhondu joined after spending a few months at Shenvi Pantoji's School. Mr. Soman's heart was full of love for his pupils, and he had a particularly soft corner for those who were devoted to their studies. In Dhondu he found such a pupil.

In 1869, Dhondu appeared for the Marathi fourth standard examination, but was unsuccessful. The failure filled him with remorse, but Mr. Soman gave him comfort and cheered him up. As a result of the encouragement he had from his teacher, Dhondu appeared again for the examination and this time he

1. *Looking Back*—D.K.Karve's autobiography, p. 11

2. *arya*—an Indian metre of Sanskrit origin

3. *Shloka*—an Indian metre of Sanskrit origin

4. *bhoopali*—hymn sung in the morning

was successful. After this his progress was uninterrupted and soon he completed the studies for the sixth standard examination which was the public examination. It was held only in bigger towns.

There was an English school at Dapoli which was about ten km. from Murud. Pupils who had passed the Marathi fourth standard examination could get admission to this school. It was Dhondu's passionate desire to go to Dapoli to learn English, but he decided to stand aside so that Dada might have a chance. Dada went to Dapoli but did not stay there long. Shortly after Dada left Dapoli, the school itself was closed down. Dhondu's ambition to learn English thus remained unfulfilled for a time. He continued to learn whatever he could at home.

The subject Dhondu loved most was mathematics. He was fortunate enough to get from Rayjishastri Deokule, a teacher of mathematics, notes on the subject. These notes enabled Dhondu to master the subject, and the knowledge he acquired stood him in good stead later. Dada had accepted the job of a teacher in a primary school in a village in the Khed taluka. According to the revised rules, it was necessary for a primary teacher to appear for the public examination of the sixth standard before he was made permanent. Dada came home on leave to prepare for the examination. Dhondu helped him in his studies and, therefore, it was not necessary for him to join a school.

Learning in school or at home and preparing for the examinations were not the only pursuits which kept Dhondu busy. He performed the worship of the family deity every day. It was a fairly long drawn-out process. He devoted some time every day to the reading of *puranas* and such works as *Rama-Vijaya*, *Hari-Vijaya*, *Shiva-Leelamrit* and

*Gurucharitra*. There were occasions when the *Shiva-Leelamrit* or the *Gurucharitra* was recited as a form of prayer or invocation of blessings from God. On the day Dada appeared for the public examination, Dhondu read the *Shiva-Leelamrit* as a prayer for Dada's success. These daily and occasional readings gave Dhondu's mind and outlook on life a religious background and gave him inspiration and guided him in the various tasks he undertook in later life. In later years, Maharshi Karve remembered with gratitude those early years and the shape they gave to his thoughts and aspirations.

Whenever there was a feast to mark the conclusion of a religious ceremony, Dhondu was asked to recite *shlokas* which he did with remarkable effect. His love of music drew him to any occasion where he had an opportunity to listen to good music or to see a good play. Whether it was *Hari-Keertan*, where devotional music was the fare, or a *tamasha*—a combination of folk-dance and folk-song—he was seen everywhere. Sometimes a dramatic company visited Murud or the nearby village of Hamai or the more distant town of Dapoli. For Dhondu the distance did not matter. He walked five km. to see a dramatic performance at Hamai or ten km. to go to Dapoli for the same purpose. One day, Dada and a number of friends went to Dapoli to see a play. Dhondu could not join them. He had seen one performance given by the same company. He was, therefore, asked to stay behind. There was a *shashti-poojan*<sup>1</sup> ceremony at the house of Mr. Barve, his father's employer. It was necessary for someone to represent the family at the ceremony and Dhondu was asked to attend it. Dhondu's heart was filled with sadness but he would not miss the opportunity. After the ceremony and the

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1. *shashti-poojan*—religious ceremony performed when a child is six days old.

dinner late at night, he joined a belated group of persons who walked up all the way to Dapoli and saw the play.

Tree-climbing and picking berries and mangoes from trees which belonged to others were the pastimes in which Dhondu heartily participated. During the rainy season, the village wells and tanks were full, and on Sundays swimming parties were organised by the grown-up men of Murud. They took the boys with them and taught them how to swim. Dhondu went with them. One day a trick played by some of the elders gave him a fright. Instead of taking him to a tank, they took him to a deep well. After giving him a false promise that they would follow, they let him into the water alone. There was no rope for him to hold and nothing else which could give him support. In a fit of nervousness, he struggled and felt certain that he would be drowned. As he went up and down, one of the men who were standing on the brink of the well took pity on the poor boy and drew him out of the water. For several months after this incident, Dhondu could not get over his fright. Later, however, he did learn how to swim and even acquired a certain amount of skill in the art of swimming.

## Early Struggle

MR. Soman, the teacher, found in Dhondu not only a diligent pupil but also a willing worker. He decided to give full scope to his young disciple's, exuberant energy and his willingness to perform any useful task entrusted to him. His friend, Mr. Pandurang Daji Bal, used to get several newspapers. Mr. Soman obtained them from Mr. Bal and with Dhondu's assistance, organised a small reading circle at the Shri Durgadevi Temple. This was a notable experiment in social education. Dhondu took up the work with enthusiasm and attended to it with devotion. He read out the news with a clear voice and many gathered to listen. The experiment, in spite of its usefulness and early popularity, was short-lived.

The winding up of the reading circle did not damp Mr. Soman's zeal. He took up another project. This time it was a store on a co-operative basis. With Mr. Bal as Chairman and Mr. Govind Vinayak Gadre as Secretary, the Vyaparottejak Mandali was founded. Shares of five rupees each were issued and a capital of rupees eight hundred was raised. The store was opened and was set up in the front room of the house of the Secretary of the Mandali, Mr. Gadre. Dhondu happened to be without any work at the time and he enjoyed the confidence of the chief promoter, Mr. Soman. He was chosen for the counter. Dhondu did the work of selling and keeping accounts with assiduous care, but sometimes he got himself lost in the maze of figures he had to deal with in the Account Book and found it difficult to extricate himself from it. His

teacher and employer was hardly any better in the task of keeping accounts. When Dhondu was away, Mr. Soman or Mr. Gadre sat at the counter and sold things. Probably that was how irregularities crept in. At the end of the year it was found that the venture was a losing concern. They carried on for seven or eight months more. Mr. Soman was cautious and prudent, and he at once saw that it would be unwise to carry on further. With regret they decided to close down the shop. They were able to pay off the shareholders with great difficulty. The promoters themselves had to forgo the money they had invested.

When Dhondu was employed, Mr. Soman had told him that he would be paid at the rate of three rupees per month. All that he received for nearly eighteen months was six and a quarter rupees. Dhondu did not mind the cut but he was sorry that the undertaking was a failure which he felt almost certain, was the result of his own carelessness. Taking the blame on himself, he thought of suffering a self-imposed penalty for it. Dajiba Kane, one of the shareholders, had purchased five shares and therefore the promoters owed him twenty-five rupees. Dhondu approached Mr. Kane through his friend, Bhikajipant Vaishampayan, and requested him to accept a promissory note for twenty five rupees. He undertook to pay the amount himself with interest. He then told Mr. Soman and the other promoters that as Mr. Kane had purchased on credit goods worth twenty-five rupees, they need not refund to him the amount they owed him for the shares. By entering into this agreement, Dhondu was able to save the amount of twenty five rupees for his revered teacher. Mr. Kane knew that Dhondu Karve had no money but he trusted him. Within a few years, Dhondu paid him from his earnings from tuitions which he did in Bombay. He paid Mr. Kane thirty rupees in all, the original sum with interest on it.

In 1869, the Marathi sixth standard examination was made the first public examination. An age limit was fixed for those who wished to appear for the examination. Dhondu had therefore to wait till he completed seventeen. The examination was held in Bombay or in district towns like Ratnagiri or Satara.

It was September 1875. Some boys from Murud decided to go to Satara to appear for the examination. Dhondu was one of them. The boys had to walk a long distance. It was no easy task.

Their elders did all they could to dissuade them from undertaking the perilous journey, but when they saw that the boys had set their hearts on it, they gave them permission. With their kit on their backs, they started.

On the first day, they had travelled about forty-eight km. Before daybreak the next day, they reached Chiplun. The police officer at Chiplun belonged to Murud and he knew the boys well. He was kind to them. He found a horse for them to carry their kit and also asked the owner of the horse to go with them.

Their kit was simple and not very heavy. Each had a pair of *dhotis* and two shirts. They wore coats and had a *roomal* tied round the head as head-gear. On their feet they had strong chappals or sandals which could withstand a journey of hundreds of miles on rugged roads. A rough blanket, known as *ghongadi*, served more than one purpose. At night, they spread it on the ground where they slept. They carried umbrellas, but something more was necessary when it rained heavily. The *ghongadi* could be used as a raincoat. One thing none of them omitted to carry was the *sowale*—the holy garment which they had to wear while taking their meals. It was not difficult for them to carry the kit on their backs but they readily accepted the offer of the horse.

From Chiplun, Patan was about fifty-eight km. and from there it was another fifty-eight km. to Satara, and they had to cover this distance in less than two days. Fortunately the road from Chiplun onwards was good. And there was the owner of the horse to give them additional company. Refreshed in; body and with renewed hope and vigour, they walked on. It was a race between time and their objective. At one in the afternoon the next day, they reached Patan. The headmaster of the local school heard about their arrival and went to meet them. He gave them courage and good advice. As the main road to Satara extended over a distance of fifty-eight km., he advised them to take a shorter route. This route, however, was more difficult. It lay through a valley, but they would be able to save a distance of nineteen km. The paramount thought in the minds of the boys was how they could reach Satara the next day. They were tired and their feet were sore with walking. The proposal to take the shorter route, though a difficult one, was too tempting to be rejected. The owner of the horse, however, protested. He pleaded that the horse was too tired and the journey through the valley was fraught with peril. With great difficulty the boys brought him round, and they started on what was the last lap of their journey. Impatience and anxiety increased in the minds of the young travellers at every step, but not in that of the horse. How was the poor animal to realise why it was necessary for it to walk faster than its drooping limbs allowed? The only person in the company who shared and supported the reluctance of the horse was its owner. The boys, on the other hand, did everything to make it walk faster—they beat it with their sticks, but even the cruel lashes could not goad it on. It was darkness everywhere when the party reached the middle of the valley. The path was narrow; on one side there was a lofty precipice and on the other a deep chasm. They could hardly see what lay a step ahead of them.

To add to their woes, as it were, the horse collapsed and refused to move on. What was the horseman to do? He could not leave his animal there, but how could he stay in the lonely place all alone in the darkness of the night? The boys once again took their kit on their weary backs, and they all moved on, leaving the poor animal in the darkness and probably to die. At about eleven at night, they reached a spot where there were a few huts which belonged to shepherds. The sight of these huts filled them with courage and they halted for a little rest. They resumed their journey before sunrise, but this time the horseman refused to go further. They had no alternative but to pay him the full hire for the journey up to Satara, and he returned.

At about five in the evening the party reached Satara. That was the day on which the examination was to commence. The last glimmer of hope which still flickered in their hearts was about to vanish but they were told that on the first day the only thing that was done was to register the names of the candidates. Immediately on their arrival at Satara, they went to an acquaintance of theirs from Murud who was working as a clerk in the Collector's Office. He took them to the Chairman of the Examination Committee. To their great delight they were told by him that he would gladly register their names next morning. Even this assurance was enough to make the young adventurers forget all the hardships they had to suffer during the unforgettable journey. Refreshed after a night's good sleep, and with new hope, they all went to the examination hall in the morning.

They appeared before the Chairman, one by one. The Chairman took down their names and registered them as candidates for the examination. Dhondu's turn came and he stood before the Chairman.

“What is your age?” asked the Chairman looking at Dhondu with searching eyes.

“I have just completed seventeen years,” the reply came. There was nervousness in the voice, because of the eyes which were fixed on him.

“No, I don’t believe it,” said the Chairman, “you look so small and so frail !”

Poor Dhondu was overcome with fear and despair. He had with him the age certificate given by his school, but the Chairman had no time to look at it.

“You can’t be more than fifteen .... ”

“Please, Sir, .... ” Dhondu made a desperate effort to say something.

“Don’t take any more of my time. I can’t admit you. Go away.” So saying, the officer turned to the next candidate.

Out of the five students who came from Murud, four were allowed to appear for the examination. Dhondu alone was refused admission because he looked too young! A feeling of acute despondency swept across his mind. He cursed himself a thousand times. What else could he do? He spent the whole day thinking about the future. The future! It was all bleak and barren! He was doomed to a life of failure and misery, he felt. How fortunate the other boys were! Why should fortune frown on him alone?

Did fortune frown on him alone? The other boys also found the next day that all the trouble they had taken to come to Satara, all the fatigue and hardships they had undergone during the terrible journey, were to be in vain. The first day’s paper was that of arithmetic. Only those who passed in that paper were allowed to appear for the next day’s paper. When Dhondu’s four companions went to the examination hall next

morning, they were told that they had failed. Fortune did not frown on Dhondu alone.

There was nothing to keep the boys in Satara any longer. They collected their kit and what little of spirits was left in them and started on their homeward journey.

Youth and ambition, when they once clasp each other's hands, can hardly be separated. Dhondu was young and there was ambition in his young heart. Of course, his ambition was not very high. To pass the Public Examination and then be eligible for the Teacher's Training Certificate—that was all he desired. He waited for the next opportunity. The months rolled by and soon the date of the next year's examination approached. This time he could not think of going to Satara. Gangadharpant Karve, a cousin of his, who was older by about fourteen years, was to appear for the examination, and he had decided to go to Kolhapur for the purpose. Dhondu went with him. He was more fortunate this time. There was no hitch or obstacle, and he did quite well in all the papers. He was declared to have passed the examination.

As a child and as a full-grown youth, Dhondo Keshav Karve had to pass through difficult tests—a long series of them. Even though he was, as he confessed many a time, of a nervous temperament, his spirit was tough. Perhaps the tests themselves gave him the toughness of spirit and every time he stood the test with greater success. Dhondu was modest, but his capacity to work, to toil and to suffer was unlimited. In those early days, there was a deep longing within him to learn and to acquire knowledge. It was not backed by self-interest. He wanted to learn because knowledge taught man to be good. To be a good man and to do good things—that was his goal.

His thoughts about his future were humble. While he was at school and even later as a college student, the idea of doing great things, of winning fame, hardly crossed his mind. Experience had already taught him how to regard success as well as failure with indifference.

After his return from Satara and even before he passed the Public Examination, an opportunity to learn English presented itself to him. At seventeen, he knew not a word of English. No education was considered complete even in those days without some knowledge of English. Dhondu joined an English class which was started by Mr. Pandurang Daji Bal who was anxious that his younger brother should learn English. He made arrangements to have a teacher from Bombay for him. The teacher had completed his education up to the Matriculation class, and was considered adequately qualified to conduct an English class for beginners. There was great enthusiasm in Murud over this new class. Karve looked upon the opportunity thus presented to him as a turning-point in his life. Had it not been for this new venture, which was started by his old benefactor, he would have considered the sixth standard examination as the ultimate goal of his educational career and would have found satisfaction in becoming a primary school teacher. The misfortune which greeted him at Satara proved a blessing in disguise—not only for him but for modern India and Indian womanhood as well.

For two years he learnt English with unbounded enthusiasm and completed three standards at the end of the period. It now became necessary for him to go either to Ratnagiri or to Bombay. He was prepared to go to any place and to live under any conditions, but that was not all that was needed. How were the expenses to be met? His father, he thought, could not afford to pay for his stay in a place away from home. He kept quiet, keeping to himself the desire to go out for further studies. Kesopant, however, knew his son's

aspirations, and decided to give him all encouragement. He even decided to take a loan from his brother-in-law to send Dhondu to Ratnagiri. Dhondu's joy knew no bounds. He walked the whole distance to Ratnagiri, and joined the school there in the third standard. At Ratnagiri there was no relative with whom he could stay. For some time, he stayed in the house of Mr. Vaman Abaji Modak with his friend, Rambhau Joshi, who was Mr. Modak's nephew. After about a month, he took a room and started taking his meals in a hotel.

In about two months, the annual examination was held. Dhondu stood fifth among the successful students and was promoted to the higher standard. He was awarded a scholarship of two rupees a month from which he was able to pay his monthly tuition fees. Everything seemed to shape itself just as he desired and, from now on, he could go on with his studies undisturbed, he thought. Hardly three months passed, however, when illness overtook him. It was a fever which continued to harass him for some weeks and did not leave him till it compelled him to leave Ratnagiri and go back home. He bade good-bye not only to Ratnagiri but, as he felt almost certain at the time, also to his plan of learning English further.

For some time Dhondu worked as a teacher in the primary school at Murud on five rupees a month. He was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to continue his English studies with the help of Mr. Dhondopant Mandlik. From him Dhondu obtained some English books and read them in his spare hours.

A few months later, his friends who had come from Bombay for the vacation promised to take him with them to Bombay. The studies which he had completed with Dhondopant's help enabled him to seek admission to the fifth standard in the Robert Money School in Bombay.

## In Bombay—School and Colleges

Bombay was altogether a new place, but Dhondu got used to the new surroundings and the new type of living without much difficulty. The boys from Murud had rented a common room. Dhondu joined them. For his meals he joined Nagopant Datar's boarding-house. The food was not bad. After a few weeks, he went to stay as a paying guest with Mr. Parshurampant Damle, his old friend from Murud, who lived in Mugbhat in Angre's chawl.

Just opposite their lodging, there was a mansion in which lived a rich man who was evidently a lover of music. Every Saturday night he had a music party in his house. Dhondu lay in his bed awake far into the night listening to the sweet strains of music from the voices of Krishni Jhulpi, a popular dancing-girl, and her daughter, Shyami. From Saturday night to Saturday night, the strains lingered in his ears and fondly did he try again and again to reproduce them to himself in his leisure moments. This became a delightful pastime for him, but the thought of going to a music party or even to a *keertan* never entered his mind. With single-minded devotion he pursued his studies and lived through days and weeks and months with hermit-like rigidity.

At the Robert Money School he won scholarships but not before he had subjected himself to a strenuous, almost painful, effort to improve his hand-writing which, in the beginning, was known to be bad. The improvement was so astonishing that when a periodical test was held, a few boys

in his class who regarded Dhondu as a rival thought of inventing a story. They went to Mr. Jackson, the teacher, and told him that Dhondu had produced an exercise which was actually written for him by his friend, Damle, who was known for his elegant hand. Mr. Jackson was easily led into accepting the story as true and did not deem it necessary to have it verified. He called the culprit—as he thought he was—to his table. Poor Dhondu was already overcome by the false accusation and the malice on which it was founded. Mr. Jackson insisted that the boys must speak to him in English only. Dhondu was too diffident to express himself in English. He was so overcome with a sense of shame that he could not utter even a word of Marathi. He was innocent, and yet he stood before the infuriated teacher who held a cane in his hand. A few seconds, and he died a thousand deaths. He was twenty one at the time. Was he, at this age, to suffer the humiliation of being caned for an offence which he had not committed? In utter helplessness he raised his hand, but before he could offer it for the punishment, it went up mechanically to his forehead. Mr. Jackson saw this gesture and at once caught its meaning. He lowered the cane.

“Will you write this exercise again?” he asked.

Emboldened by the tenderness in his voice, Dhondu at once replied that he could do it and added that he could write it in the teacher’s presence. He was asked to go back to his class-room where he wrote the exercise in the presence of his class-teacher. Though it was not as good as the one he had produced before, the improvement it showed over his former writing was too marked to be doubted. Mr. Jackson was fully satisfied and Dhondu was exonerated.

Maharshi Karve has mentioned this incident in his reminiscences as an illustration of one of his shortcomings.

His own comment on it was that, had he not been so nervous and timid, he would have offered to write the exercise to prove his innocence even before Mr. Jackson asked him to do so.

When Dhondu was promoted to the seventh standard, which was the Matriculation class in those days, he met Narhar Balkrishna Joshi whose friendship he valued for many reasons and left a permanent impress upon his mind and his whole life. Narharpant had appeared for the Matriculation Examination that year, but owing to somebody's carelessness, his answer-book in English was lost. He yielded to the fate of repeating far another year only after he had made every possible effort to save it. He not only met Principal Carss of the Robert Money School but also went several times to the Registrar of the University who conducted the Examination. The missing answer-book could not be traced. Narharpant felt much humiliated. He also felt keenly the loss of a year. When he joined the seventh standard again at the commencement of the new academic year, he found Dhondu among those who were promoted from the sixth standard. He was attracted by Dhondu's natural intelligence and studious habits. Very soon, they became friends and began to study together. Narharpant's resoluteness in everything and the way in which he easily won the good opinion of others had a profound effect on Dhondu's mind. Without a single pie in his pocket, Narharpant had come to Bombay. A gentleman from his home town, Deorukh, who was serving in the High Court, allowed him to stay in his house. Narharpant did all sundry jobs for him. He was intelligent and won scholarships which enabled him to meet his expenses in Bombay.

There was a hostel for Christian students which was situated near Cowasji Patel Tank. Rev. Jani Ali, a Muslim convert, was its superintendent. Narharpant succeeded in

winning Rev. Jani Ali's favour and obtained from him a large room in the hostel premises. He invited Dhondu to join him, and they both used the room as their study room. After dinner in the evening they went to the room where they studied together. They slept there. In the morning they spent another hour or two in the same room for their studies and then went back to their respective lodgings.

There was much in Narharpant which Dhondu admired. He heard his friend discuss religion with Rev. Ali and Principal Carss boldly, and learnt much from the arguments put forward by him. Although Narharpant was not able to give his friend some of his boldness and resourcefulness, he found in Dhondu a willing disciple who, as a result of the long talks they had, gradually shook off many of his old ideas and beliefs. At first, Dhondu was shocked to see Narharpant drinking water touched by Rev. Ali or Principal Carss, but gradually learnt to do it himself.

In less than a year after Dhondu went to Bombay for his education, his father, Kesopant, died. It was the rainy season. Dada did not inform Dhondu of their father's illness as travelling was very difficult on account of the rains and he took care to see that his brother's studies were not disturbed. Kesopant's last illness was of a short duration. When news of Kesopant's death came, Dhondu was overcome with grief and he cursed himself for not being able to be at his father's bedside during his last illness. He also tried to think of the future which appeared to him to be dark. Deprived so suddenly of his father's care and support, what was he to do and what place would he have to occupy in the family?

Kesopant died on the *Nagpanchami* day in the month of *Shravan* (August). His son was not able to return to Murud and meet the other bereaved members of the family for about

ten weeks. He met them during the Diwali holidays. Dada was already there. They discussed plans for the future. It was all too evident that they had very difficult days ahead, and for a time they did not know what they could do to face the situation. Through all the dark and desperate hours, it was their mother who gave them courage and the strength of mind, not by words but by her own example. During her husband's last illness, she displayed admirable courage. When it became known that Kesopant's end was, near, she did not lose heart. She went through all her household duties and did all the nursing of the dying patient herself. Whenever she could snatch a few spare moments, she sat before the family deity and prayed. She prayed that she may have the fortitude to face the worst when it came. It came in about forty-eight hours, and then she kept perfectly calm. It was beyond her to protest against those hideous rites which she was subjected to as a widow, but she went through the painful and humiliating process of having her head shaven without so much as a sigh. Dada and Dhondu realised now, as they never did before, what a tower of strength their mother was to them. They did what she told them. It was decided that Dada should give up his job at Bankot and take up one at Murud so that he might be able to stay with the family. Dhondu's education in Bombay was to go on undisturbed. It was suggested by some well-wishers that expenses over boarding could be reduced if Dhondu accepted charitable offers from well-to-do families to feed him on certain days of the week—what is known as the *vaar* system. The suggestion was resolutely brushed aside. More stringent measures of economy were decided upon. It was expected that by adopting these measures Dhondu would be able to reduce his monthly expenses by four rupees. If necessary, a loan could be taken from Mr. Paranjpye, Dhondu's maternal uncle, who gladly promised to give all the help they

needed. During the next two years, they received from Mr. Paranjpye a total sum of two hundred rupees as a loan.

Austere as the days were, they were not without their lighter, merrier side. The five or six weeks of summer holidays which Dhondu spent at Murud were full of fun and merriment. Dhondu was fond of dramas, and from his early boyhood he used to participate in the staging of plays. Kesopant did not at first like the idea of his son's appearing on the stage with a painted face and in different roles. Dhondu was, however, able to convince him that even in places like Poona and in an institution like the Deccan College, students were encouraged to take part in such pastimes. He usually took the lead in organising such performances. Once he brought two stage curtains from Bombay. Dhondu's talents were available not only for the role of Ganapati in the prologues in which he spoke in Sanskrit, but also for composing dialogues in Sanskrit. His popularity grew when once he spoke as Radha from behind the curtain. One of the unforgettable parts he acted was that of Ashwatthaman in some of the scenes from the Sanskrit play, *Venisamharam*.

Dada had promised to send four rupees every month, but that was hardly enough. And he could not spare more as his own monthly income was not more than seven or eight rupees. Dhondu was anxious to relieve his brother of the burden as far as possible. He was fortunate enough to secure tuitions soon after his arrival in Bombay. For teaching the younger brother of one of his class-mates for an hour every day, he expected at least two rupees at the end of the month. What he actually received was just a rupee. His heart was filled with joy to receive even that amount as it was his first earning since his arrival in Bombay, but he gave up the tuition the

next day. One or two others which he soon found were more paying. A gentleman who came to him every Sunday to read the verses from the *Nav-neet*<sup>1</sup> for an hour paid him two annas. Thus he was able to add eight annas to his monthly earnings. In the fifth and sixth standards he was awarded the first scholarship but in the seventh he got the second and for a few months the third. With these additions to what Dada sent, he was able to meet the expenses without any difficulty. Gradually he became more confident about his own capacity and worth. When he passed the Matriculation Examination at the first attempt, he began to feel that he could do many more things and achieve greater success.

Four years before, he had not dreamt that it would be possible for him to pass the Matriculation Examination. In his later life, Professor Karve conceived wonderful and ambitious plans of public service with a vision that was all his own and carried them through with remarkable success. During those early days at school, however, he could hardly see beyond a step. Every day, every hour, he felt nervous about the next step he had to take. But he was not without hope. And even in the midst of nervousness and diffidence, there was determination. With a step that did not falter, he went on. His path became smoother on account of the encouragement and help he had from his mother and from his elder brother.

Mother and Dada, who took charge of the affairs of the family, made it easy for Dhondu to go on with his education uninterruptedly. For him those were unforgettable days. They were full of trials and difficulties, but they were also filled with tenderness, patience and courage. It was during those days as a student that the foundation of Professor Karve's later career as a social worker and educationist, and his life's

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1. *Nav-neet*: Anthology of old Marathi verse

mission was being laid. It was the foundation of sacrifice and mutual help, of affection and devotion.

Among those who contributed to the magnificent task of laying that foundation were his parents, his brother and his sister, Ambatai. From Dada and Ambatai he learnt the great lesson of patience and the still greater lesson of preserving a mind at peace with itself under all circumstances. He could think of no other person who showed greater kindness to him than Dada. For Ambatai, his heart was full of admiration for the cultured mind and outlook so highly developed in her although she had no education or learning of any kind.

There was still another person whose contribution to the making of his character was no less significant. Dhondo Keshav Karve and Narhar Balkrishna Joshi were close and constant companions for over ten years. They lived together when they were students of the Robert Money School. Afterwards they had a joint establishment. Narharpant created in Dhondu a love for reading. They read together many books. One of these' was R. W. Trine's *In Tune With the Infinite*. Mr. Joshi later translated this book into Marathi. Whatever he spoke was the product of careful thought and to Dhondu it always gave food for meditation. As Professor Karve has acknowledged in the story of his life, it was Narharpant's influence that considerably widened his outlook on life and gave it a rational turn.

Dr. Mackichan, Principal of the Wilson College, always tried to draw intelligent students to his college. Dhondo Keshav Karve's rank among the successful candidates at the Matriculation Examination was sixteenth. His friend, Narharpant, stood third. Dr. Mackichan succeeded in inducing both Joshi and Karve to join the Wilson College through Rev. Jani Ali, and by offering them scholarships.

It was only after the results of the Matriculation Examination were declared that Karve could confidently look forward to a career at the University. With Narharpant's help he was able to obtain books from those who had already passed the previous (First Year University) examination. Wilson College in those days was situated on old Girgaum Back Road. Narharpant obtained rooms on the top floor of Gopinath Khatri's chawl for a monthly rent of Rs. 3.75. This building was very close to the college. Narharpant brought his wife to Bombay, and they set up home. His younger brother, Waman, also stayed with him. Karve joined them as a paying guest. Both Joshi and Karve got scholarships and they earned a good deal by doing private tuitions. Karve had to repay the loan his uncle, Mr. Paranjpye, had given him. He, therefore, worked very hard. He accepted all the tuitions that were offered to him. How could a college student do tuitions for several hours of the day and still apply his mind sufficiently to his studies? But Karve scarcely gave serious thought to this problem, for he was bent on repaying the loan at an early date even at the cost, to some extent, of his studies. Thus he was able to release himself from the liability—it was a sum of two hundred rupees—before he completed his college education.

While Karve and Joshi were at the Wilson College, they had heard a good deal about the Principal of the Elphinstone College, Dr. Wordsworth—grandson of William Wordsworth, the poet—who had become the idol of his students. He fascinated them by his teaching of poetry. To learn in an institution of which Dr. Wordsworth was Principal was considered a piece of good fortune and it was a great honour if a student attracted his notice and became known to him.

Karve, Joshi and two other students of the Wilson College decided to join the Elphinstone College after passing the previous examination. It was difficult for them to obtain the

transfer certificate from the Wilson College. Luckily for them, Dr. Mackichan had gone to Scotland on furlough. He would never have allowed the two bright students who had obtained a good second class in the previous examination to leave his college. Rev. Stothart, who was the acting Principal, was very angry, but after strenuous efforts, the four students succeeded in obtaining their leaving certificates. Karve's leaving certificate which bears the date December 4, 1882, states that he left "for no fault, but of his own free will". Dr. Wordsworth was very kind to them. He not only admitted them, but at once offered them free studentships. Ordinarily a student was required to be in the college from at least a term and show satisfactory progress before he was considered eligible for the concession. Here, again, it was Narharpant who did everything that was needed to win Dr. Wordsworth's sympathy and favour for all of them.

The Elphinstone College was in those days at Byculla, opposite the Victoria Gardens. Karve and Joshi had to travel by the local train. They purchased season tickets from Grant Road instead of the Chami Road Station, in order to save a little money. During the winter months, they dispensed with the season tickets altogether and walked the whole distance from Girgaum to the college and back. Mathematics was Karve's special subject. It was taught in those days by Professor J. Hathornthwaite, who was known to be typical of an earlier generation of Oxford, and whose delight it was to refer with zest to the "Cambridge cowards whom the College walls harboured." Although Karve was attracted to the Elphinstone College by Principal Wordsworth's fame as a great teacher, he found it difficult to follow his lectures which, he confessed in his autobiography, were beyond the grasp of ordinary students. He had, however, the satisfaction that he was able to join the Elphinstone College and count himself among Principal Wordsworth's students.

Among the fellow-students at the Elphinstone College were Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the great mathematician, educationist and national leader; Chimanlal Setalvad, the distinguished lawyer and politician; T. K. Gajjar, founder of the chemical industry in Bombay; and Chintaman Gangadhar Bhanu and P. J. Padshah—two other men who distinguished themselves in public life.

Karve passed the B.A Examination of the University :of Bombay in 1884 with Mathematics as his special subject. Other and perhaps greater achievements came in later years, but this one was remembered by him with special satisfaction. While he was learning in the primary school at Murud, his ambition was to pass the Public Examination which was the sixth standard examination. At the Robert Money School, he felt that he would consider himself very fortunate if he was able to' pass the Matriculation Examination. Now he was a graduate. He looked back on the years he had spent in the school and in the college with satisfaction not unmingled with pride.

He was twenty-seven at the time. Narharpant decided to study law and would have liked his friend to do likewise. Karve, however, had already made up his mind. He had a feeling that he would never be able to make a success in the legal profession. He wanted to take the M.A. degree but he was not very keen.

During the whole of their college career, Narharpant Joshi and Dhondo Keshav Karve stayed together except during the last six months. Joshi sent his wife home during this period and took a room in the college hostel in order to be able to devote all his attention to his studies before the final examination. Karve took advantage of this change and brought his wife, Radhabai, and his two-and-a-half-year-old son,

Raghunath, to Bombay. Thus it was more than ten years after his marriage that he had what he could call his own home for the first time. Before Raghunath, their eldest son, was born, Karve utilised his stay at Murud in teaching his young wife and Ambatai, his sister. The idea of educating girls was foreign in those days to the people of Murud, but Karve's parents who had a broad mind and outlook gave him all encouragement in his first effort to give education to women. The two girls made considerable progress. When Karve returned to Bombay, Dada continued the work of teaching them. Raghunath's birth in 1883 interrupted it for some time. When Radhabai came to Bombay, her husband collected the threads where they were left two and a half years before. In a few months, she was able to read any Marathi book without difficulty and even completed the first two books of English. This she was able to achieve during the short time which Karve could spare for her in the midst of his heavy work.

## Teacher

**I**t is difficult to draw a distinguishing line between Dhondo Keshav Karve as a student and as a teacher. Even before joining the Wilson College, he had achieved a fair amount of success as a private tutor. It was a difficult job but before he was aware of it, he had begun to like it. After his graduation he decided to stick to the teaching profession. By now, he had before his eyes a fairly clear idea of his purpose in life. His immediate object was to seek a full-time job so that he could contribute to the maintenance of the family at Murud and relieve Dada, at least partially, of the burden he had borne alone since their father's death. But there was a higher purpose. He chose a career in which it was giving that mattered most. There was nothing more precious than knowledge that a man could give. And so he chose teaching not merely as a vocation, but as his mission in life.

Mr. Vaman Abaji Modak was the Principal of the Elphinstone High School at the time. He knew Karve since he had stayed in his house at Ratnagiri as a student. Mr. Modak had also seen him once or twice in Bombay. There were two vacancies in the school, one of them permanent and the other temporary. Narharpant, with his natural gift of making a favourable impression on everybody, was taken up in the permanent post. Karve went to Mr. Modak to request him to appoint him in the other—the temporary post.

"Do you think you can teach a class of forty boys?" Mr. Modak asked.

Karve felt very nervous. He summoned whatever boldness he could and answered,

“I think I can, Sir. At least I’ll try.”

“It isn’t an easily job, my boy,” said Mr. Modak, “you look too young to be a teacher.”

“But, Sir ....” Karve could not speak further.

“I’m sorry I can’t take you up.”

Karve was sorely down-hearted. But he did not lose hope. Mr. Hathornthwaite who was his professor at the Elphinstone College knew him very well. So he went to him and told him about the conversation between Mr. Modak and himself. The kind-hearted professor consoled him and promised to do what he could. In a few days, a call came from Mr. Modak. Karve saw him and was told that he was appointed.

His first day’s performance in the school as a teacher was not disappointing. He was asked to go to the fourth standard in which there were forty boys. The young apprentice had the satisfaction that he could manage the class well.

Professor Hathornthwaite also introduced Karve to some officers in the army for whom a knowledge of mathematics was essential. Karve taught them mathematics and earned a decent monthly income from these private tuitions. For three turns a week, each of the officers paid him twenty or twenty-five rupees per month.

When he completed a year at the Elphinstone High School, Mr. Modak, who had now changed his opinion about him offered to appoint him permanently. Karve thankfully declined the offer. He had decided not to take a permanent job under Government. Two or three paying tuitions would be quite enough, he thought. He was not particularly anxious to do any other job, as he intended to read for the M.A, and offer physics and chemistry for the examination. In 1887, three

years after he had taken the first degree, he appeared for the M.A. examination, but was not successful. He then gave up the idea for good.

His old professor found for him a few more jobs; these were part-time jobs in two schools—the Cathedral Girls' High School and the Alexandra Girls' High School. In each of these he taught the Matriculation class mathematics and a little science. He worked for an hour and a quarter every day at the Cathedral Girls' School and for two hours a day at the Alexandra Girls' School.

In these two schools the students were mostly from European or Parsi families. Karve's dress was that of a Hindu—a dhoti, a coat of the 'Parsi' style buttoned up to the neck, a turban, shoes and socks. The Principal of one of the schools threw a polite hint one day that he would be better advised to wear trousers instead of a dhoti. The poor teacher who had never put on trousers in his life did not know what to do. He spent long hours for three or four days in brooding over the problem. At last he thought of borrowing a pair of trousers from a friend. He sent his cousin, Raghunath Paranjpye, who was staying with him, to Mr. P. S. Laud whom Karve knew well. Mr. Laud readily gave him his trousers. After wearing the borrowed garment for three or four days, Karve found that, after all, it was not so uncomfortable as he feared it would be and then he had a pair or two stitched for himself. For a number of years he continued to wear this mode of dress—trousers and a long coat, with a turban to complete the picture.

One of his teachers at the Robert Money School, Rajaramshastri Bhagwat, founded the Maratha High School in Bombay. Karve was one of Mr. Bhagwat's favourite pupils. As he had continued to take kindly interest in his pupil even after he had left school, Rajaramshastri asked him to join the

high school founded by him. Karve joined it as a teacher and offered to work for a small payment. Rajaramshastri was very glad to have him and looked forward to the day when Karve would join him as a life-member of the institution. Karve knew something about the New English School which a small group of young and selfless workers including Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar had founded in Poona a few years before. He looked upon Mr. Bhagwat's school as a similar venture and hoped that, one day, when he was free from the worries about his family at Murud, he would be able to dedicate his life to the cause of education by joining the Maratha High School as a life-worker. He worked with selfless zeal.

The work he did in the schools and his private tuitions kept him busy for not less than eight hours every day. He had also to spend considerable time in going from one place to another. He chose to walk the distance as a measure of economy. It was hard, strenuous work that he was doing but he enjoyed doing it. It also gave him a good monthly income which enabled him to lay by a little after doing all that was needed to help his mother and Dada.

He began his day's time-table with his private coaching class for the European and Anglo-Indian boys of St. Peter's School at Mazagaon at six in the morning. During winter months, it was necessary for the class to have a lamp lighted at least for the first half an hour or three quarters of an hour. From Girgaum where he lived, he walked to St. Peter's School, and it took him nearly an hour to do so. Radhabai woke him up at 4-30. She had his breakfast ready for him at 5. It consisted of rice mixed with curds. As he walked every morning from Girgaum to Mazagaon, he felt fresh and strong and looked forward to another day of useful and hard work. Without knowing it, the young teacher who did not nurse any high ambitions about himself was walking the same unknown path

in the early hours of the dawn from darkness to light which was chosen by Agarkar and Tilak in Poona in the same sphere but perhaps in a humbler way. As he taught the boys of St. Peter's and of Maratha High School and the girls of the other two schools, he felt the satisfaction of having done something which not only gave him and his family their subsistence, but also contributed to the intellectual progress of the boys and girls whose buoyant, eager, smiling faces drove away all the fatigue of his body and mind.

Even after working from six in the morning till late in the evening with two or three very brief intervals for a hurried lunch at home or for a cup of tea at an Irani restaurant, Karve still found time to look after his wife's progress in studies.

Narharpant Joshi and D.K. Karve continued to have a common lodging and establishment even after their graduation and after each had found a full-time job. A third friend, Moreshwar Ramchandra Kale, the well-known author of the two books on Sanskrit grammar, joined them. The whole household consisted of Narharpant, his wife and his younger brother; Karve, Radhabai, little Raghunath and Radhabai's sister; and Mr. Kale's family. These three families lived happily together for seven years.

In Karve's life and daily schedule there was little room for pleasures, but he loved the happy life of contentment he had during those seven years. It was Radhabai, his wife, who gave him that happiness in the midst of hard work. As an ideal Hindu wife, she kept to herself and made a deliberate effort to forget all the inconvenience and heart-burnings that inevitably arose in the joint establishment and never bothered her husband with them. Karve could see how patiently and even gladly she bore the burden of the household.

True to his zeal for the spread of education, Karve had brought to Bombay four boys from his home town. One of

them was Raghunath, son of his maternal uncle, Purushottampant Paranjpye. Karve made it a point to visit his uncle at Murdi whenever he went home for the vacations. During one of his visits, he saw Raghunath writing something on the slate.

"Do you want to learn English, Raghunath?" he asked : the boy,

"Yes, I do, Anna," the boy eagerly replied.

There was something in the young voice which struck Karve. He at once knew that Raghunath had in him the making of a scholar. In fact, Raghunath had the example of his cousin, Dhondu held before his eyes by his mother. Among the earliest recollections of Dr. Raghunath P. Paranjpye were the words spoken by his mother, "Be a learned man like Dhondu." She used to tell him every now and then how wise and learned Dhondu was. These words continued to ring in Raghunath's ears. The body was only waiting for an opportunity to try and be like "Anna" as all younger members of the family called Karve and as he was called and known in intimate circles.

Karve took the boy's slate and wrote the first four letters of the English alphabet on it.

"Take this and learn these letters well," he told Raghunath. After his afternoon nap he examined the slate and was glad to see that the letters were neatly written.

"Will you go with me ?" Karve asked the boy.

Raghunath answered by putting on his shirt and cap. In a few minutes, his kit was ready. Karve had already obtained his uncle's permission to take the boy with him. Raghunath was nine years old at the time.

For a few years, Karve arranged to have Raghunath admitted to the Mission School at Dapoli. Wamanrao, Narphenpant's brother was a teacher in that school.

Raghunath stayed with him. When he completed the first three standards, Karve took him to Bombay. Karve's way of making financial provision for his wards was unique. He could never forget the yearning he had for learning and the difficulties he encountered as a student. One of his first thoughts, therefore, was for poor and deserving students. He would give them encouragement and help, but he was anxious to teach them self-reliance and to spare them the humiliation which they might feel at having to receive help only as charity. To some of them, including even his own cousin, Raghunath Paranjpye, he advanced the amount they needed for their higher education as a loan. He maintained a detailed account of the original sum and the interest on it at the rate of 3 1/4 per cent as if it was the account in a Postal Savings Bank. He also took out a life insurance policy for a thousand rupees in the name of Raghunath Paranjpye as he did in the case of the others. When Mr. Paranjpye paid off the loan, the policy was returned to him. After the loan was repaid, the grateful ward and student assigned the policy in favour of Karve's institution, the Anath Balikashram at Hingne. Karve sometimes said with a touch of regret that if he had not chosen the life of poverty as he did, it would have been possible for him to help many more students in their educational efforts.

His son Raghunath's *upanayan* was performed in a very simple manner in Bombay. Mr. Achval, his friend, also had his own son's *upanayan* performed along with that of Raghunath in the same way. They managed everything in fifteen rupees, and thus were able to save three hundred rupees which the ceremonies would have cost if they were performed in the traditional manner. This amount the two friends handed over to the Murud Fund which was started a few years before by Karve and a few others. The interest was to be spent on the education of girls or for the spread of English education.

Dada followed Dhondu's advice and example in deciding to have the marriage of his daughter, Manutai, performed without spending much. His brother helped him to find a bridegroom who belonged to a poor family but was intelligent. Karve took the boy later with him to Bombay, and the boy stayed with Karve's other wards in his house. Later, when Karve joined the Fergusson College in Poona, the boy joined the New English School and passed the Matriculation Examination in due course. For him also Karve had a life insurance policy. Unfortunately he died before he could even complete his education. From the amount of his insurance money, Karve gave the boy's poor old father what he needed to payoff his debts, and the balance was given to the Murud Fund.

There were three other boarders in the house besides Raghunath Paranjpye. While Raghunath took full advantage of the opportunity he had to learn, the others did not show much progress in their studies. Paranjpye soon distinguished himself by his brilliant scholarship. He appeared for the Matriculation Examination in 1891 and stood first among the successful candidates.

The boys who stayed with Karve went to the Maratha High School. Looking back on those days, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye wrote in his introduction to Dr. D. K. Karve's autobiography:

“Many great men appear great only from a distance, but they do not appear so to those who have intimate contacts with them. I cannot say that about Anna. He belongs to that rare type of men who inspire even greater respect and affection as intimacy with them grows and continues. Garrick, the noted actor of the English stage, was among the young men who went to Dr. Johnson for learning. These young students paid greater attention to their teacher's queer ways of behaviour and eccentricities than to his learning and other great qualities.

They made fun of him behind his back. We, four or five of us, who lived with Professor Karve in Bombay, were much like Dr. Johnson's students. Hardly anyone of our other teachers escaped our jeers. We often laughed at them, amongst ourselves of course. But we considered it to be an unpardonable sin even to talk about Anna in a lighthearted and frivolous manner. To give him a little offence or to cause him the slightest pain was something we could not even think of, for even a frown or an angry word from him was to us the severest penalty. The capacity so to inspire the younger generation as to command only their love and respect is, I believe, one of the rarest virtues that have made Anna great. Even we, in those early days, knew that he had in him the qualities of a great man. In later years when his fame spread throughout the country, we, his early students, felt proud and, of course, delighted, but we were not surprised."

Raghunath Paranjpye and the other boys were very happy under the motherly care of Radhabai. While she looked after their food and physical comforts, Karve took care of their progress in studies. Radhabai's task was by far the more difficult. She had to get up early in order to have her husband's breakfast ready for he left home before sunrise. Then she had to cook food for the boys. She worked tirelessly and worked without grumbling. The boy looked upon her as their own mother. When they returned home tired after a day's hard work, she greeted them with a smile and with words of affection, and thus made them forget their fatigue and their worries, if they had any. Karve's conscience pricked him often for his inability to give his dutiful, uncomplaining wife the rest she badly needed and he feared that her health might break down under the weight of the household duties. His worst fears came true. The strain proved too great for the poor housewife. Her health broke down. Sometimes she found it

impossible to leave her bed. Then the boys did the cooking with their Anna by their side to give them instructions. When Radhabai's illness grew worse, Karve sent her back to Murud.

After a stay of several weeks at Murud, Radhabai longed to return to Bombay. She returned but once again her health broke down. Again she went back to Murud—this time never to return. Karve knew and she knew it too that the hand of death was upon her. Karve wrote to her consoling letters and tried to prepare her for the inevitable. Her letters to him were full of love. Their hearts continued to remain knit together.

It was *Nagapanchami*, the fifth day of the month of *Shravan*. It was on this day, twelve years before, that Kesopant, Karve's father, had died. This *Nagapanchami* proved to be the last day in his wife's life.

The sky was overcast with dark clouds. There was darkness also in the heart of the poor teacher who walked from one school to another and did all his work with his usual calmness. He moved and worked like a machine.

Three days later it was evening. Karve returned home at the usual hour. A letter was waiting for him. He look it up and opened it. It had brought him the news of Radhabai's death. The rush of grief within did not show itself on the face which remained calm. At night there was no sleep, but in the morning he got up at the usual hour. The next day found him in no way different. The whole routine was gone through as usual as if nothing had happened.

Radhabai's husband perpetuated her memory with a donation of five hundred rupees to the Murud Fund for a scholarship to be named after her.

## The Woman's Age

The nineteenth century is commonly believed to be the age of Indian renaissance and enlightenment. The age may more appropriately be called the woman's age. Long before there was a political awakening or before Western education began to instil new ideas into the minds of young Indians, there was a consciousness, almost everywhere in the country, that the women of India were falling or being dragged from the position of honour they had always occupied in the past. The deterioration which had taken place in the status of Indian women, and had culminated in a very pitiable state to which they were subjected, was the accumulated and accumulating result of conditions over which the people of India had no control or had lost control. These conditions were the product either of foreign invasions and the necessity which was felt for affording protection and security to women, or of blind customs and mistaken ideas of religion. In ancient times and even in mediaeval time. Indian women were held in high reverence. The dictum that "where women are adored, there dwell in happiness the deities" (यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः) was not merely a matter of belief but was practised and established throughout the ages. In an address on "The Woman Soul" which the late Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, an eminent leader of the social reform movement, delivered in 1911, he pointed out:

"... the Hindu loves his home and our *Shastras* represent the home as heaven, with woman, rather the woman soul, as

its presiding genius, and even in common parlance, we give woman the first place; we speak of mother and father and not father and mother, wife and husband and not husband and wife, daughter and son and not son and daughter: and the very word family (कुटम्ब) means amongst us *wife*, because wife is taken to include husband, children and all those who constitute the members of a Hindu home. And this because the woman soul, according to Hindus is the soul endowed by God with the virtue of patient suffering and kindness...<sup>1</sup>

The pages of the *Vedas* or of the *Upanishads* or of the *Mahakavyas* or even of later history tell glowing tales of the achievements of Vishwvara and Lopamudra, Maitreyi, Gargi and Saraswati, Kaikeyi and Satyabhama, Sceta, Savitri and Draupadi, Jijabai and Tarabai, Ahalyabai and Lakshmibai—these are only a few among those women of India who maintained the tradition which was laid down by the dictum यत्र नार्यस्तु .... It is no exaggeration to say, as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya so boldly asserted, that “no country could have attained the height of civilisation which India attained, nor have given to the world the wealth of knowledge that she gave, if her womenfolk had been kept down and denied equal opportunities and rights with her menfolk”<sup>2</sup>

It was, therefore, no accident nor the product of the impact of Western civilisation, but the consciousness of the status which women had enjoyed in India in the past which stirred the heart of Ram Mohan Roy, even before he became familiar with the conditions of Western society, when, in 1812, he vowed to himself that he would never rest until the atrocious custom of *sati* was rooted out. The scene was the funeral of his eldest brother, Jagmohan. Jagmohan's widow had

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1. *The Speeches and Writing of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar*, p. 421

2. “The Status of Women in India” in *Women in Modern India*, edited by Evelyn C. Gedge and Mithan Choksi (D.B. Taraporewala and Sons, 1929)

announced her intention to die as a *sati*. Ram Mohan endeavoured to dissuade her from the terrible decision, but his entreaties had no effect. Later, however, after she ascended the funeral pyre of her husband and the flames began to surround her delicate frame, she tried to get up and escape. Her relations and the priests forced her down with bamboo poles and kept her there to die, while drums and brazen instruments were loudly sounded to drown her cries. Her brother-in-law, Ram Mohan a helpless spectator, stood with his eyes filled with tears and his heart full of indignation and it was then that he took the vow.

As Mr. S. Natarajan in his *A Century of Social Reform in India* tells us :

“Contrary to the general opinion, the British, far from initiating the abolition of *sati*, were the last of the contemporary governments in India to move against it.”<sup>1</sup> Akbar had tried to put down the practice although he did not succeed and it was Aurangzeb who, after rejecting a petition of the Brahmins against the rescue of a widow from the funeral pyre of her husband at Agra, decreed that “in all lands under Mogul rule, never again should officials allow a woman to be burnt”. According to Sir John Malcolm, the Marathas had, by a wise neglect, which neither encouraged by approval nor provoked by prohibition, rendered the practice very rare. On the other hand, when the Collector of Shahabad, Mr. M. H. Brooks, forcibly prevented the burning of, a woman in 1789, he received a rebuke from the Government (East India Company) that he must not resort to coercive measures but use private authority only. On December 5, 1812, the Government resolved to allow the practice where it was enjoined by religion and to prevent it where it was prohibited.

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1. *A Century of Social Reform in India*, S. Natarajan, p. 23

Girls under sixteen, women who were pregnant, and women under the influence of drugs or intoxicants were to be present at pyre to see that everything was in order.

The zeal and devotion with which Ram Mohan Roy threw himself into the campaign against the practice of *Sati* by writing tracts, addressing petitions to Government, organising vigilance committees for being present at cremations to prevent coercion and visiting the burning-grounds in Calcutta to try his powers of dissuasion for the rescue of helpless or willing victims was the result of the working of his own heart and conscience which had their moorings in the best and enduring traditions of the country and of Hindu society. How natural was the reverence he had for women can be illustrated by a story whose authenticity need not be questioned. When a Scottish friend asked him. "If you find two persons being drowned and if one of them is your countryman, and if you can rescue only one of them, will you not rescue your countryman?" Ram Mohan Roy promptly replied, "Yes, but if the other person is a woman, I would rescue her."

Although, at first he was inclined to leave the final abolition of the practice of *sati* to voluntary effort. Ram Mohan Roy gave his active and whole-hearted support to Lord William Bentinck who prohibited the practice by law. The abolition of *sati* by law in 1829 was, however, only the commencement of a campaign to render justice and equal status to the women. If the ancient traditions of the country recognised her dignity and status, custom and continuous usage which had come to stay as a result of prevailing conditions in a society which was caste-ridden, convention-ridden and priest-ridden, had made her the sufferer of many evils, iniquities and hardships. As the infant in the bridal attire as the child-wife married to a man who in many cases was perhaps only a few years younger than her grand-father, as

the young widow compelled by convention or the wicked desire of the relatives or the desire of her own heart steeped in meaningless tradition to ascend her husband's funeral pyre, as the mistresses of a rich household compelled to waste her talents and hide her charms under the cover of the *purdah* or as an intelligent girl denied the opportunity to acquire the benefits of knowledge and learning through education, the woman was made the victim of instruments and measures of degradation.

Among the various types of women sufferers, the widow's lot was most miserable and pathetic. In many cases, widowhood was the only mark of relationship between her and her husband after the marriage rites. In Bengal those men who belonged to a class known as *kulins*—as those belonging to the so-called higher classes were called—married any number of wives, mostly child-wives, very few of whom lived with their husbands in the accepted sense of the term. If the ill-fated girl or woman did not die or refused to die with her earthly lord, she was to lead a life of austerity and torture of mind which was perhaps worse than death itself. Babu Pratap Chandra Mazoomdar, the Brahmo leader, narrating the sufferings of his own mother who was a widow, gave a vivid and pathetic account of the lot of the Hindu widow in the following words:

“But, if men were more compassionate and society recognised their right to the commonest necessities of life, perhaps they would be less hard on themselves and many a heart-stricken son would be spared the misery I felt when I found my beloved mother's life sink under the load of the world's neglect and indifference.”<sup>1</sup>

It was therefore, not enough to rescue her from the flames of her husband's funeral pyre; this was accomplished by the Act of 1829. Fortunately for the Hindu woman, Ram Mohan

Roy's example and ways of reform were adopted by a number of high-minded men in Bengal, most of whom belonged to the Brahmo Samaj, the spiritual brotherhood founded by him on the belief in one God and universal brotherhood. After him came Devendranath Tagore, known and respected by all as the Maharshi who carried on the work of the Brahmo Samaj with vigour and devotion. Under him and more particularly under Keshub Chunder Sen, the third great leader, the Brahmo Samaj became a powerful all-India movement of social reform. Into its fold and towards the personalities of the Maharshi and the Brahmananda (as Keshub Chunder Sen was called by his friends and disciples) were drawn a number of men who became known both for their intellectual gifts and selfless zeal for reform—pioneers of the emancipation of women. Among them was Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who was Principal of the Sanskrit College. Although he moved away from the Brahmo Samaj in later years, he retained on his life and character the effects of the teachings which he had from Devendranath and other great leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. Iswar Chandra took the next great step on the path of reform which was begun by Ram Mohan Roy and William Bentinck. In October 1855, Iswar Chandra presented to the Government a petition for legislation to remove all obstacles from the path of those Hindu widows who wished to marry again. Within a month, Sir John Peter Grant, a member of the Legislative Council, presented a bill which was passed into law in July 1856. This was Act 15 of 1856, legalising the marriage of Hindu widows.

“If I knew for certain that but one little girl will be saved by this Act from the horrors of *brahmacharya*. I would pass it for her sake ... “ said Grant in the speech with which he moved

and sponsored the bill. That was the object—to facilitate the opening of the gates of a new life for the Hindu widow as the second step after her rescue from the fatal horror of *sati*. The passing of the bill into law was a triumph for reformers like Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who took it as a call for furthering the cause of reform which was mainly the cause of the Hindu women. He took an active probably a leading part in bringing about the first widow remarriage which has been described by Pandit Shivanath Shastri, an eye witness, in the following words:

“I shall never forget the day. When Pandit Vidyasagar came with his friend, the bridegroom, at the head of a large procession, the crowd of spectators was so great that there was not an inch of moving space, and many fell into the big drains which were to be seen by the sides of Calcutta streets in those days. After the ceremony, it became the subject of discussion everywhere; in the bazaars and in the shops, in the streets, in the public squares in students’ lodging houses, in gentlemen’s drawing-rooms, in offices and in distant village homes, where even women earnestly discussed it among themselves. The weavers of Santipore issued a peculiar kind of women’s *sari* which contained woven along its borders the first line of a newly composed song which went on to say ‘May Vidyasagar live long’.”

The Brahmo Samaj and its members took an active and leading part in bringing about marriages of widows during the twelve or fifteen years which followed the passing of the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. As observed by Pandit Sitanath Tattvabhushan. “Many a widow had literally to be stolen from their parents’ house, and the history of their rescue will ever remain as a great monument to the moral enthusiasm

and devotion to the cause of suffering humanity of the early members of the Samaj."

One of the most devoted members of the Brahmo Samaj who so worked and toiled was Sasipada Bannerji. His first act was the promotion of the marriage of his widowed niece in 1868, Later, his house became a refuge for widows and about forty widow marriages took place under its roof.

It is noteworthy that the work of rescuing young widows was always undertaken and carried out with such great care that in no case was marriage permitted between the young widow and her rescuer.

With the movement for improving the lot of widows were linked the other two movements of raising the age of marriage and the education of girls. Among those who were rescued from the compulsion of sacrificing the life on the funeral pyre of their husbands, there were many child-widows and only a few of them would come forward or be persuaded to agree to a second marriage. For them it was necessary to find some means by which they would be enabled to be self-dependent, and education was the only means which could give them an independent economic status, and a position of respectability in society. It was, therefore, natural that leaders of social reform should take up the cause of women's education.

Those who gave the lead in this field of social reform were the Christian missionaries. The first school for Hindu girls in Bombay City was started by the American Missionary Society in 1824. The progress made by the Society in this field was remarkably rapid, and it had nine schools in Bombay with 400 girls in 1829. Two more schools were opened by the same Mission in Ahmednagar in 1837 and soon afterwards a boarding school for girls was established. The Church Missionary Society and the Scottish Missionary Society also

opened schools for girls. With this missionary activity and with the work of the Scottish Missionary Society are associated the names of Dr. Wilson and his wife, Mrs. Margaret Wilson who started schools for girls in 1829-30. Dr. Wilson was fortunate enough to enlist the sympathy and active support of some of the prominent and influential citizens of Bombay. Among them was Jagannath Shankarseth who helped Dr. Wilson to start a school for girls in the locality known as Thakurdwar where people belonging to the upper middle classes lived.

Indian private enterprise was not slow in recognising its share in the task. In 1847, Dadabhai Naoroji founded the Students Literary and Scientific Society with the help of Professor Patton of the Elphinstone Institution, and Bhau Daji, V. N. Mandlik and others. Two years later the Society established schools for girls in which its members taught without remuneration for two hours every day until it became possible for the Society to have public support through contributions to pay full-time teachers. Within a few years, the Society was able to establish and run on sound line, a number of Marathi and Gujarati schools for girls. In Poona the first school for girls was started by a man who was born in a community which was looked upon as backward, and who was mainly guided by his own conscience and vision in the pioneering work he started and efficiently carried on for the emancipation of the backward classes and for women. His name was Jotiba Phule who is reverentially remembered in the modern history of Maharashtra as Mahatma Phule. The first school for girls was started by him on July 3, 1851 with eight girls. The number rose to 48 in a short time. Teachers were appointed, but the organisers of the school could pay them only small salaries and, therefore, there were frequent changes in the staff. Savitribai. Jotiba's wife, was made Head

Mistress of the school. Before long, the Female Education Society was formed. Two more schools for girls were started soon afterwards. The first school was publicly examined on February 17, 1852.

"A vast crowd of citizens assembled to witness the function. After the examination was over, Bhausaheb Manday said in a speech that he was sorry that the worthy citizens assembled had not so far realized the importance of female education. Quoting the great English poet, Milton, Mr. Brown, the judge, said that happiness and usefulness would bless the home if women were educated."<sup>1</sup>

The East India Company at first did not look upon the cause of the education of girls with favour, because the general feeling which prevailed at the time in official circles was that "the scheme of Female Education is doubtless unpopular, and looked upon by the masses with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mohamedans, and that suspicious, ill-disposed natives may consider it subservient in some degree to the views of proselytism."<sup>2</sup>

It was Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General (1848-56), who directed the Council of Education to look upon the education of girls as one of its functions and declared that Government ought to give it frank and cordial support. The famous Wood's Despatch of 1854 approved of the orders issued by Dalhousie. Thereafter, the cause of the education of girls began to receive increased support from Government, but the pioneers in the field were men like Dadabhai Naoroji and Jotiba Phule. Under their leadership, private enterprise laid the early foundations on which, about forty years later,

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1. *Mahatma Jotirao Phyle*, Dhananjay Keer, pp. 32-33

2. *A Review of Education in Bombay State* (Century Volume of the Department of Education, Bombay State), p. 388

Dhondo Keshav Karve erected the edifice of his institution, the Mahila Vidyalaya at Hingne.

The cause of the marriage of widows was taken up in Maharashtra by Vishnu Shastri Pandit in the early sixties of the last century. He is known as the Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar of Maharashtra. The work which Pandit Vidyasagar started in Bengal—the work of educating public opinion in favour of the marriage of widows—was taken up in Maharashtra with great zeal by a band of workers among whom Vishnu Shastri Pandit was prominent. The Widow Remarriage Act was passed on July 25, 1856. This measure was expected to give encouragement to those widows who wished to marry again and begin their lives anew. Although the law came forward to support their cause, general opinion in society, in Maharashtra as in other parts of the country, was opposed to this reform. Men like Vishnu Shastri, however, believed that the true reformation of societies as of individuals was, as Dr. James Martineau has pointed out, “from the centre to the circumference; from a solitary point deep buried and unnoticed, first to the circumjacent region, and then over the whole surface; from the native force and inspired insight of some individual mind that kindles, first itself, and then by its irresistible intensity, a wider and wider sphere of souls; spirit being born of spirit, life of life, thought of thought.”

The mind which kindled itself first and then others in Maharashtra belonged to a man of irresistible zeal for reform. He was Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as ‘Lokahitawadi’. Lokahitawadi came to Bombay in 1862. Shortly after his arrival, he started the Anglo-Marathi paper *Indu Prakash*. Vishnu Shastri Pandit wrote on the Marathi side and Mahadev Govind Ranade, another leader who ardently advocated the cause of social reform, wrote articles in English. There was no item they advocated more forcefully

than the marriage of widows. Day after day, Vishnu Shastri wrote with the very blood of his veins. In one of his articles, he pointed out the evil effects of enforced widowhood in the following words :

“It is only the relatives—the fathers, or fathers-in-law or brothers—of the child-widow who can have an adequate idea of the agony of enforced widowhood. It is not easy for every child-widow to guard herself against temptation. Those poor creatures who thus become victims of the evil intentions of men are simply driven to commit such crimes as infanticide. Then living becomes impossible for them for they are looked upon as a blot on the fair name of the family. If, on the other hand, society gives encouragement to those who wish to marry again it will be an effective check on such immoral acts and crimes.”

In the same year in which the *Indu Prakash* was started, the first widow marriage took place in Bombay. It was known to a very few persons as it was kept a guarded secret. For seven years, Vishnu Shastri fought bravely and incessantly. In 1855, he founded the Vidhava-vivahottejak Mandal (Society for the Encouragement of Widow Remarriage). It had the good fortune of having as its president the Raja of Jamkhindi, and another gentleman of high social standing, Sardar Madhavrao Vinchurkar, became its vice-president. The moving spirit behind the Mandal was, of course, Vishnu Shastri himself. Mahadev Govind Ranade enlisted himself as one of its active supporters. The *shastris* and pandits who championed the cause of orthodoxy, took up the challenge by starting the rival organisation Hindu Dharma Vyavasthapak Sabha (Society for the Protection of the Hindu Dharma). The Sabha had no difficulty in enlisting the support of the bulk of Hindu society. Those who belonged to Vishnu Shastri's camp

were few but they were earnest souls. They effectively met the attacks of the Sabha and carried on their work undauntedly. The first tangible fruit of their efforts was seen in an announcement which appeared in the *Indu Prakash* in which a widow declared her intention of marrying again. The announcement had a quick and favourable response. The supporters of the Sabha could no longer contain their feelings of alarm and indignation. They ran to the Shankaracharya for his protection and aid. They also organised a mighty campaign which culminated in a debate which was to decide whether or not the marriage of widows was sanctioned by ancient scriptures. The meeting at which the debate was held ended in confusion and chaos. Nor was this all. The advocates of reform received continued threats that the *Indu Prakash* press would be burnt and the *mandap* in which the marriage of the widow was to take place would be destroyed. The leaders themselves received death threats. Fortunately for Vishnu Shastri and his friends, the owner of a gymnasium, himself a man of great physical strength, silenced those who gave these threats by giving counter-threats. The promoters went on with the arrangements and the marriage took place on June 15, 1869 in Bombay in the midst of great pomp and enthusiasm. The spacious hall in the house of Moroba Kanhaba was beautifully decorated for the purpose. Hundreds of guests from all communities were present. The bride and bridegroom were the recipients of the good wishes of a large number of friends and well-wishers many of whom gave rich presents. As the earlier widow marriage which had taken place seven years before was given no publicity, this marriage is looked upon as the first known widow marriage in Maharashtra.

The *Indu Prakash* carried glowing accounts of the grand event to the remote towns and villages of Maharashtra. In one of the villages in Konkan, a lad of eleven read them with

great interest. He heard and sometimes participated in the animated discussions that took place. The people of Murud took special interest in the event, because the bride, Venubai, originally belonged to Murud. Frequent discussions on the general question of the marriage of widows also took place, and Dhondu listened to them with rapt attention.

What he heard and read on the subject of the marriage of widows had a profound effect on his mind. Even in those early years, he learnt to regard it as a good and righteous act. His teacher, Mr. Soman, was a man of liberal views. He and his friend, Mr. Bal, read the *Indu Prakash* and discussed the views expressed in its columns, and particularly those contained in Vishnu Shastri's writings with which they found themselves in agreement. As he heard them talk, Dhondu learnt much about the reform movements. He pondered over what he heard and it largely contributed to the moulding of his own views. As he pondered, he began to look upon the question of the marriage of widows as one of paramount importance. If there was a noble act a man could perform, it was this—help the cause of the marriage of widows—he felt.

In 1883 (June 12), a poem appeared in the Marathi biweekly, *Kesari*, in which the poet made a stirring appeal to society to show kindness and give justice to the girls of the tender ages of eight or even six, who were being married to old men of fifty or sixty; to the child-widow whose lot was lifelong misery and servitude; to the women who were their mothers, sisters, and daughters but whom social custom regarded as dumb animals confined to the kitchen and to the cradle. The poem ended with these sentiments:

“Stop this persecution; show your helpless sisters mercy and kindness. Shake off, O brothers, harsh feelings from your hearts. Like brothers, lead your sisters to a new life through remarriage.”

Karve was a college student in Bombay at the time. He read and re-read the poem. He sang it to himself and sang it loudly. Narharpant heard him singing with rapt attention. Whenever friends called, he was asked to recite the poem. The words and the moving appeal contained in the poem made a profound effect on those who heard it as it was recited by Karve. He forgot himself and his surroundings as he sang the verses. The deep feeling with which he sang lent greater poignancy to what the poet wished to convey.

His friend of early boyhood, Rambhau Joshi, displayed uncommon courage when, against the wishes of his parents, he took his widowed sister to Jubbulpore for her marriage to a suitable young man. This example of his friend continued to shine before Karve's eyes and gave him immense enthusiasm. In later years, it gave him the strength and determination to do the right thing. Radhabai's early death, cruel as it was, made him ponder long over what he read in the *Indu Prakash* in those years of immaturity at Murud.

Narharpant's three sisters were married at an early age, and all of them became widows before they reached the prime of life. The eldest of them, Akka (her name after her marriage was Ambikabai Bhave), did not reach it. She never recovered from the effects of the tortures to which widowhood subjected her. Narharpant and his younger brother fought hard to save her from the painful, disfiguring process to which she decided to submit herself. She could not have willingly prepared herself to have her head shaven and to wear the garment of red colour ever after. It would have been possible for her brothers to hold her back. But there was an elderly aunt, herself a widow, who not only warned and admonished her niece but also held her own example before her eyes. After the process, Akka was altogether a different being. She renounced all that could be even remotely pleasant in life and hardly came out of her small room which was no better than a dungeon, where even the rays of the sun could not enter.

As Narharpant and Karve lived like brothers, there was a close bond of relationship between him and Narharpant's family. He regarded Akka as his own elder sister. His heart bled to see her horrible plight. He wanted to induce her to change her attitude towards life and her surroundings. He tried but did not succeed. There was one thing which perhaps he could do to satisfy the only longing which was left in her grief-stricken heart. If he did it, she would die in peace. Yes, it was all too evident that her end was fast approaching, and there was only one anxious thought that stood between her suffering soul and its liberation. That anxious thought was about her only daughter, Balee. She requested Karve to find a suitable husband for Balee. Karve tried and succeeded. He was happy to be able to induce his uncle, Mr. Paranjpye, and his aunt to choose Balee as a bride for Raghunath. Four days after the marriage took place, Akka died.

Although he had the consolation that Akka was able to die in peace, Karve could not efface from his mind the cruel fact that it was the curse of widowhood that had brought about her early death.

Karve had unbounded reverence for his mother. The feelings he had for her taught him to regard all women with reverence. But he was pained to see the difference between her lot and that of many others. He knew some who were led astray by temptation and by the sinful motives of men. In his home town, Murud, there was a girl who, though not a widow, lived like one, as her husband had deserted her and had disappeared. She was condemned to a life of servitude in the house of a distant relative who was a priest. One day, it became known that the poor girl had been caught in the snares of a heartless man. Consequently she had to leave the house of her benefactor at once.

Where she went nobody knew. Karve saw her some years later at Narsoba Wadi where he had gone with Gangadharpant after the Public Service Examination at Kolhapur. She was there in the temple performing the *pradakshina*<sup>1</sup> with a rosary in hand. How did she come there? What did she do for her livelihood? With whom was she living? Was she alone and did the baby have a normal birth and was it living? As these thoughts crossed Karve's mind one after another, the woman saw him. She stood still for a moment, and then disappeared.

Since Radhabai's death, these memories frequently disturbed his mind. He pondered over them. There was no impetuosity in his nature, but he carefully thought over what he regarded as a call. Gradually he made up his mind, and nothing could then deter him from his resolve. Many of his friends tried to persuade him to take a second wife from among girls of marriageable age. As a widower, he could marry only a widow. He resolved to take the step only after obtaining the approval of his mother and of Dada. He decided not to think of remarriage if they did not give their consent to his remarriage to a widow.

It was thus not surprising that the widower who had almost become a recluse (when he left Bombay) began to entertain the idea of becoming once again a householder. The driving force was, once again, provided by the passion to do good—this time, to set a personal example in the field of social reform. When, some years before, Narharpan's younger sister, Godubai, who was a child-widow, came to Bombay and stayed in the joint household at Gopinath Khatri's chawl, Karve could not have in his wildest dreams, foreseen that she was going to be his partner in a life of nearly sixty years and in his great and noble effort to serve the cause of womanhood.

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1. *pradakshina* : Circumambulation from left to right of a person or an object as a kind of worship.

## Call From Poona

From its earliest beginnings, Maharshi Karve's life had been one of giving and very little of receiving. The Murud Fund was just one of the numerous tangible results of his passion to do some good somewhere for someone always. While he was studying at the Elphinstone College, he had begun to earn by giving private tuitions. For every rupee he earned, he set aside a piece for charity. On the day he began his work as a teacher at the Elphinstone High School, he started what he himself named "The Maratha Five Per Cent Fund". Five per cent of his earnings were credited to this Fund. His teacher, Rajaramshastri Bhagwat, had a great fascination for the word *Maratha* which he gave to the school he founded. Karve liked the name because his teacher liked it. The amount collected in the Maratha Five Per Cent Fund was judiciously used for some good cause. Preference was given to education. Karve carefully kept an account of the amounts credited and spent.

Nagopant Datar, an old friend from Murud, had started business in Bombay long before Karve came to Bombay for his education. He ran a boarding house and Karve had his meals in this boarding house. Nagopant fell ill. He was suffering from a disease of the lungs. When the illness became worse, he closed down the boarding house and went back to Murud with his wife and mother. While in Bombay, Mr. Datar had borrowed five rupees from Karve and he had not been able to repay the loan. During his visit to Murud for the vacation, Karve heard about the rapidly deteriorating condition

of Nagopant's health. He went to see him. Nagopant was overcome with shame and remorse when he saw his old customer who was also his creditor. He had not been able to repay the loan he had taken from him.

"Have you come to demand the repayment of the loan I took from you?" Nagopant spoke in a low tone, "I'm so sorry my illness made 'it impossible ...'"

"Don't worry, Nagopant," said Karve comforting the dying man. "That's not the purpose of my visit. I have come to enquire about your health and to tell you that you need not worry about repayment of the loan. Let us regard the amount as repaid."

Nagopant could hardly find words to express his gratitude. He made a desperate effort but Karve stopped him.

"Maybe, this'll be of some little help to you in your present need." So saying he took out three rupees from his pocket and gave them to the dying man. Tears of gratitude rolled down Nagopant's cheeks. He could not speak.

The three rupees Karve gave to Nagopant were the first accumulated amount from the collection he made by setting aside a pice for every earned rupee. The act gave him a feeling of satisfaction which an income of three thousand rupees could not have given him.

The Karves of Murud took special pride in the temple of Durgadevi and the spacious tank. In their days of plenty and prosperity, their forefathers had taken the initiative in giving the town the temple and the tank. Both were the pride of Murud. Dhondo Keshav Karve regarded the maintenance of these two old institutions as a legacy handed down by his forefathers. His family had long ceased to be prosperous and his own earnings were just sufficient for his own needs and those of his family. Still, in 1889, he took the initiative to get

the temple repaired. The tank, however, was found to be beyond repairs.

The Marathi School and the Middle School at Murud owe their present position of stability to the early efforts of a group of friends headed by Dhondo Keshav Karve. In 1889, he and three or four of his friends made a house-to-house collection to give the schools a building of their own.

It was with a different object that the residents of the Dapoli taluka, under Karve's leadership, founded the Sneha-vardhak Mandali. The object was to give its members a composite social life. The headquarters of the Mandali were in the taluka town, Dapoli. It was Karve's anxious desire to have the membership thrown open to non-Brahmins also. At its first meeting, he made a fervent appeal in which he quoted instances to show how the people of the taluka, their own forefathers, had given the non-Brahmins a place of honour in their festivals and generally in the administration of all public affairs. His appeal proved to be a cry in the wilderness, but the promoters of the meeting achieved their main object. The maugural meeting led to a series of similar meetings and functions which were held once every year in other towns till 1893. In that year, Karve was compelled to sever his connection with the Sneha-vardhak Mandali as it became clear to him that on account of his marriage to a widow which took place in that year, his presence would be unwelcome to many of its members. The Mandali itself came to an end within a year after Karve left it.

For a few weeks after Radhabai's death, Karve went on with his work with the former zeal and devotion, but in his heart there was gloom. At times, however, he thought of his own future. He felt that he was now free to choose his vocation. As the Maratha High School engaged his thoughts and aspirations, he nearly decided to devote the rest of his life to

the service of that institution. These thoughts and plans were suddenly interrupted by a letter. It came from an old friend who was with him at the Elphinstone College, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Gokhale was a professor at the Fergusson College in Poona. This college was started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and a few others in 1885. The same band of young men had founded the New English School some years before the college was started with the object of rendering selfless service to the cause of education. They had also founded the Deccan Education Society. Those who wished to give their lifelong service to either of the institutions were admitted as life members of the Deccan Education Society which conducted them.

In 1891, Professor Bal Gangadhar Tilak left the Fergusson College and the Deccan Education Society on account of differences with his colleagues, foremost among whom was Agarkar. As a result of Tilak's resignation, Gokhale whose subject was mathematics had to teach English. As this subject made greater demands on his time and energies, it became necessary for the Society to look for a man who could relieve Professor Gokhale of mathematics. He thought of Dhondo Keshav Karve who was with him at the Elphinstone College and had made a mark as a good student of mathematics.

Professor Gokhale's letter was an invitation to Karve to join the Fergusson College.

It was a great honour and a rare piece of good fortune to be invited to join an institution like the Fergusson College—so Karve thought. But he was diffident. He was only a B.A. How could he, he wondered, teach students of the B.A. class? He felt that it was beyond him to control big classes in the college. He decided to thank his friend for his offer and

regretfully declined it. When he told Rajaramshastri, his old teacher, about the decision, the kindly old man laughed at his vague fears.

"Don't be a fool, Karve," said Rajaramshastri, "if you don't accept the offer, you'll regret your folly all your life."

"It's enough for me to have an opportunity to serve the cause of education here, Sir," politely Karve told his teacher. "Why should I think of leaving the Maratha High School?"

"Precisely because the Fergusson College needs you and there you will have greater opportunities to do what lies nearest your heart."

Karve accepted Rajaramshastri's advice in all humility. The good old Shastri was sorry to lose the services of an intelligent and earnest young man, but he would not think only of his institution, and he knew that Karve's talents were better suited for a college.

At the first interview, it was agreed that Karve should serve the Deccan Education Society for a period of two years as a probationer. Two months after the interview, on November 15, 1891, he joined the Fergusson College as Professor of Mathematics.

Before the period of probation of two years was over, he was admitted as a life member of the Deccan Education Society. His connection with the Society as an active worker continued till 1914, the year in which he retired with a pension after serving the Society for twenty-three years.

The teacher from Bombay who became a professor in Poona had no difficulty in adjusting himself to the new environment. He had the experience of teaching mathematics to college students of the Previous and Intermediate classes, as some of them came to him for private coaching. Until his

cousin, Professor R. P. Paranjpye, joined the Fergusson College on his return from England as a Senior Wrangler, Karve was the only professor who taught mathematics. When Professor Paranjpye came, he was free to do some teaching in the New English School also. For some years, he worked only in the New English School. In 1912, he completed twenty years of service, and was free to retire, but the Society retained his services for two more years.

Karve came to Poona as a widower. From the beginning he had ruled wealth and pleasures out of his life. Affection for the family and his sense of duty moved him, but there was no attachment. At thirty-three, the young professor had already become old in experience and in wisdom; but the shoulders continued to be young enough to bear any burden of public service. Dominated by his passion to do good he worked ceaselessly, and in work itself he found his reward.

## The Bold Step

More than a hundred and fifty years ago, Keshavrao Joshi, a well-to-do resident of Deorukh (in Ratnagiri district) had taken a second wife when he had reached the age of fifty, as his first wife bore him no children. The second wife was hardly ten years of age at the time of the marriage. This wife bore him seven children—four sons and three daughters. The eldest of the children, Balkrishna Keshav Joshi, was the father of Narharpant and Godubai. Godubai remembered with pain the story of the unequal marriage to which her poor grandmother had to yield. Her own lot, however, was hardly better. She was married when she was eight years old to Mr. Natu after his first wife's death. He was seventeen years older. The marriage took place without any pomp at Makhjan where Mr. Natu's parents lived. Mr. Natu died within three months of his marriage and Godubai became a widow.

When Godubai was twenty-one, she had to resign herself to the fate which inevitably befell a widow—a shaven head and the red garment. Not that her father-in-law, or even her mother-in-law, wished to have the poor girl disfigured thus. In the midst of orthodoxy, they held liberal views and they were kind-hearted, but even they were helpless. They could not ignore or set aside the requirements of the *Shastras*.<sup>1</sup> It was society that dictated in such circumstances, and individuals who wished to live as respectable members of society had to submit.

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1. *Shastras*: Holy scriptures

Once a year, Godubai went to Deorukh and stayed there with her parents for about a month. During one such visit, her brother, Narharpant also was there. He offered to take his sister with him to Bombay where she could have some education. Godubai's old mother did not like the idea. A little later, however, when Narharpant's wife died and he needed someone to keep house for him, his mother was obliged to give her consent. At that time, Godubai had come to Deorukh to visit her elder sister, Akka, who was on her deathbed. Instead of returning to Makhjan, she went to Bombay with her brother, Narharpant.

At twenty-four, Godubai began to learn the alphabet and the arithmetic tables. Narharpant himself taught her for some time, but did not find the task easy. He was therefore, glad to see an announcement in the papers about a school for girls which Pandita Ramabai proposed to start in Bombay.

Pandita Ramabai had announced that she would admit girls under twenty. Godubai was four years too old. Narharpant, however, was not to be discouraged. He went to the Pandita with his sister. To his surprise, he saw that she was willing to admit Godubai although she was twenty four. In fact, she was the first applicant, and at the time of the opening of the Sharada Sadan, she was the first and only student admitted to it.

With an umbrella in hand and shoes on her feet, Godubai walked every day from Girgaum to Chowpatty where the Sharada Sadan was housed in a bungalow. A widow with a shaven head wearing shoes was something not only strange but also abominable to the eyes of those who saw her.

Before she went to school every morning, Godubai had to cook food for the whole household which consisted of twelve persons. She had also to look after her little motherless

nephew. This was more than she could manage. After some time it was arranged that Godubai should stay at the Sharada Sadan of Pandita Ramabai as a boarder.

Even at the Sharada Sadan Godubai had to do work, but it was not very strenuous.

While Godubai stayed with her brother and before she joined Pandita Ramabai's school, Karve frequently assisted his friend (with whom he shared the joint establishment) in teaching Godubai. After she went to live with Pandita Ramabai, Karve sometimes accompanied Narharpant when he went to visit his sister at the Sharada Sadan.

Her stay at the Sharada Sadan was a great opportunity for Godubai. Pandita Ramabai was a woman of lofty ideas and possessed a strong will. She taught her students at the Sharada Sadan both by her words and by her example. She regarded work with the same devotion with which she worshipped God. She told her students that success in anything was not easy to attain.

"A woman has no greater enemy than herself," the Palldita told them. "You must equip yourselves to work out your own salvation."

She also sowed in their minds the seeds of social service.

"Even if you teach a single widow, I shall consider my efforts fully rewarded," she used to say.

'These words found a permanent place in Goduhai's heart.

In Pandita Ramabai's large heart there were many soft corners. Some of them were occupied by orphans. The kindness she showed to poor, forsaken children was an example Godubai emulated and practised in her later life.

Pandita Ramabai shifted the Sharada Sadan to Poona about a year and a half after it was founded in Bombay. Godubai also went to Poona with the other inmates. About the same time, Karve also had gone to Poona to join the Fergusson College. Godubai used to go to Mehendale's Wada where Professor Karve stayed to meet her father or her brother during their visits to Poona.

Balkrishna Keshav Joshi, Godubai's father, was a kindly soul. The people of the village called him *Baba*.<sup>1</sup> He was a devotee of Rama. His devotion was not of the traditional type. His Rama was the all-pervading God, Creator and merciful Father of all men and women. His faith in Rama never faltered. He had three daughters, all of whom had lost their husbands and one of them, the eldest, had died soon after she had become a widow. His eldest son, Narharpant, was a widower. Baba took all these calamities with calm resignation, but he was always anxious to see that his children should be happy once again. Godubai had become a widow three months after her marriage. Why should he not get her married again? He was not afraid of the opposition of society. Against the orthodox custom, he allowed Godubai to perform the worship of the family deity. "It was Rama's will that you should live thus," he said to her, "then He cannot refuse to accept worship from your hands."

After the Sharada Sadan was shifted to Poona, Baba came to Poona sometimes to visit his daughter. He stayed with Mr. Sathe, an old friend, but he made it a point to visit Professor Karve.

During one such visit, Baba said to Karve :

"How long do you and Narharpant wish to live like this?" He was referring to their life as widowers.

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1. *Baba* : Father—a term of affection and respect

"I can't say what Narharpant has in his mind, Baba." Karve replied, "It's a long time since I met him last. And we have so far not discussed our plans for the future."

"Have you thought of your future? Do you wish to live for the rest of your life as a widower?"

"No. But I shall think of taking a second wife only if I can marry a widow."

"You don't have to take much trouble to look for a bride; just say the word."

Professor Karve understood what Baba meant. He did not say anything for a few moments. Then he asked Baba, "Are you really serious about what you suggest, Baba?" "You know, Dhondu, that I never say anything that does not come from my heart."

"Well, then, if that is your wish, will you speak to Godubai and ask her first?"

Baba went to the Sharada Sadan the next day and spoke to his daughter.

This was not the first time that Baba had asked Godu about a second marriage, but whenever he spoke to her, she used to say,

"No, Baba, don't ask me to marry again. If widowhood is my lot, my second husband might also die and leave me in the same condition. I think I am all right as I am. My relatives at Makhjan are kind and good to me. I shall spend the remaining years of my life with them and find whatever happiness I can by serving them!"

Pandita Ramabai also had tried to persuade Godubai to agree to a second marriage. She had placed before her several proposals her Bengali friends had suggested for a second

marriage. Godubai told her that she did not at all wish to marry again.

This however, was not her firm resolve. Sometimes she used to think of her future. Her younger sister, Krishni, also was a widow and she had a son. How long could they all continue to be a burden to their father or to their brother? If, on the other hand, she accepted the proposal of a second marriage, it might be possible for her to help both Krishni and her son.

Godubai asked the Pandita about Baba's latest proposal. "Mr. Karve does not look very strong and healthy," she replied. "He is short and frail. He doesn't earn a good salary at the College. Besides, he has a twelve-year old son."

She was quite right, Godubai thought. The Pandita, however, had advised her to wait for a year and take a decision after a year.

However, she did not wait for a year. After giving the proposal much careful thought, Godubai decided that although there was a certain amount of risk in the second marriage, it would be wiser for her to accept the proposal. She was already twenty-seven and she would have to live for many more years still at the Sharada Sadan to complete her education. It would be extremely difficult for her to find a job after that.

She told Baba about her decision which he conveyed to Karve.

The eleventh of March 1893, was the last of Godubai's stay at the Sharada Sadan. The dawn brought with it mixed feelings of nervousness and delight. Her friends helped her to put on the wedding dress. She had her hair grown after she came to stay at the Sharada Sadan. After nearly twenty years she raised her finger for the first time to her forehead to

decorate it with the red mark, *kumkum*. Then she went with Pandita Ramabai and her friends to the house of Annasaheb Bhandarkar, an advocate of widow marriage whose widowed daughter, Gangubai was married to Lakshmanrao Bhandarc in 1874. The wedding was to take place there. About forty friends who had responded to an invitation which was signed by Principal G. G. Agarkar of the Fergusson College and Ramabhau Joshi, Professor Karve's old friend, were present. Vedamoorti Bhikambhatji Vaze, an orthodox priest, volunteered his services to officiate, and the marriage rites were performed in the midst of great enthusiasm but without any display or pomp. There was to be no giving away of the bride. Pandita Ramabai personally supervised the arrangements at the Sharada Sadan where she held a reception after the marriage rites. Godubai was her first student and, therefore, her heart was filled with joy to see that she was going to have a home of her own. She gave her rich presents, and the other students of the Sharada Sadan expressed their delight by presenting to Godubai a poem which was specially composed for the occasion by one of them.

No member of Karve's or Godubai's family was present. Karve's mother and Dada had given him their unwilling consent, and it was too much for them to be present at the wedding. It was enough that Baba had taken the initiative in bringing about the marriage. Karve did not wish this fact to be known, but somehow, a reference to it appeared in Principal Agarkar's paper, the *Sudharak*. Even this reference gave sufficient ground to the people of Deorukh who imposed on Baba a heavy penalty including the payment of a hundred rupees for repairs to the three temples in the town, and then compelled him to take a *prayashchitta*.<sup>1</sup>

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1. *prayashchitta* : atonement for a sin

Professor Karve's second marriage to a widow had a mixed reception, but the voices of those who condemned it on social as well as religious grounds were far louder than those who expressed their approval. He was fortunate enough to be able to have the sympathy of his landlord, Gangadharpant Mehendale, who took no objection to his staying in his house after the marriage. Newspapers like the *Indu Prakash* and the *Subodh Patrika* of Bombay, the *Dnyan Prakash* and the *Sudharak* and the *Kesari* of Poona, the *Vaidarbha* of Akola and the *Vengurla Vritta* of Vengurla wrote appreciatively and congratulated Professor Karve on the bold step he had taken. Others condemned the act in strong terms and expressed great concern over the effects of the step on Hindu society as a whole.

In a letter which Professor Karve wrote to Mrs. J. W. Andrews, President, Ramabai Association, Boston (U.S.A.), on February 2, 1894, he gave expression to his feelings in the following words :-

“ ... Pandita Ramabai has already described, in pathetic and eloquent terms, the condition of our high-caste widows in her book, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*; and I will only add this here, that but for the Sharada Sadan, my wife's lot would have been the same as that of her more unhappy sisters.

“It is not easy to mention all the numerous advantages which my wife has derived from her stay of four years in the Sadan. She has come out of it with a keen love of knowledge and a mind enlarged and enlightened. Her views about life and our work in this world have also been materially altered.

“ ... I must also express my gratitude to Pandita Ramabai in whom the girls in the Sadan find a real mother and whose love of discipline and great capacity for management have made the Sadan so successful.”

Godubai, whom her husband gave a new name, Anandibai, stood by her husband's side during the weeks and months that followed. They did not mind much the attacks of the newspapers, but it was more difficult for them to face the criticism and condemnations of personal friends and relatives. It was inevitable that there should be some estrangement between them and their old friends, but the treatment they had from the people of Murud was too painful to bear. It was not altogether unexpected. When Professor Karve and Anandibai went to Murud during the next summer holidays, they had to face the full fury of the residents. When he visited his friends, they would give him a separate seat in order to avoid contamination from a man who, they felt, had sinned against religion. There were some who suggested that, having married a widow, Karve was no longer a Brahmin and, therefore, his name should be removed from the list of members of the Murud Fund. At a meeting of the residents which was held on the day after their arrival, it was resolved that Karve and his wife should not be received in any house or at any public meeting or function. It was also resolved that, should Dada receive his brother and sister-in-law in his house thereafter, he and the whole household should be subjected to a complete social boycott. The members of the Sneha-vardhak Mandali who met at Kelashi resolved by a large majority not to allow Karve to participate in their functions.

Karve was prepared for the severe measures adopted by the residents for his own boycott, but when he heard of the clause which concerned his brother, he was greatly pained. It meant that he was to be separated from his brother and his mother, from Ambatai and all his other relatives who loved him so much and for whom he had the same affection. He

would suffer the social boycott, gladly but to be separated from his dear ones was something he could not bear. Painful as the separation was to himself, the thought of causing pain to mother, to Dada and to Ambatai was even more painful. Dada had sorrows in full measure. His wife had died and he had lost as many as seven children, but he had not allowed the equanimity of his mind to be disturbed by these calamities. When, however, the terrible decision of the citizens about his brother was conveyed to Dada, he lost all balance and strength of mind. For a time, his state of mind became very pitiable and gave cause for anxiety. Karve knew of what was happening, but he was helpless. He was not allowed to enter his own house. He could not even speak to his mother or to Ambatai. It was only after Dada was taken by Paranjpye, his uncle, to his house that Karve could have an adequate idea of how hard the blow had hit him.

Karve and his wife stayed in a stable by the side of the family house. Their movements were closely watched by the women in the neighbourhood. These women spread exaggerated or false reports and took particular delight in spreading scandals about Anandibai. Karve bore it all without much difficulty, but poor Anandibai found it too hard. She knew hardly anyone in the town, and none even spoke to her a kind word. When the scandals about herself reached her ears, she lost her temper and sharply retorted to those who happened to be nearby.

Pondering over the consequences of the step he had taken, and particularly on the harsh treatment his family had received at the hands of the people of Murud, Karve began to wonder whether he would have taken the step if he had foreseen what was going to happen. He felt extremely miserable during the

period when Dada's health was causing anxiety. With a sigh of relief at the news of his return to normal health, he decided not to brood over what had happened, but to look ahead and not to look back. He turned towards the future with a resolve never to repent or to falter.

## The Missionary

On their return from Murud, Professor Karve and his wife settled down to a life of work and service. Both of them had their training for several years in the rough school of hardship and had learnt to scorn delight and love work for its own sake. The painful experience of Murud which they shared with each other became a unifier. It taught them to know each other more intimately, and drew them closer together.

But their adversaries thought otherwise. Shortly after their return to Poona, Narharpant came on a brief visit for some business of his own. Within a few days there were rumours. Someone said that Narharpant had come to Poona because he had disquieting news of frequent quarrels between his sister and her husband. What other reason could he have to come to Poona? Another person asked. So they all concluded that Professor Karve and Anandibai could not get on together and were contemplating separation.

In Poona itself, Professor Karve did not have to suffer much persecution. After their marriage, Principal Agarkar of the Fergusson College invited them to dinner. Mrs. Agarkar blessed Anandibai with the traditional gift of a coconut and a *khan*<sup>1</sup> given only to married women who are not widows. The other professors were not unsympathetic although their wives

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1. *Khan*: blouse-piece

took care to see that Anandibai did not come too near them at functions like the *haldi-kunku*.<sup>1</sup>

Thirteen months after their marriage, their son, Shankar was born. Anandibai continued to do all the household work practically till the last day of confinement. There was no elderly person in the house, and she had to look after the comforts of the boarders. The two girls, Manu, Dada's daughter and Balee, Raghunath Paranjpye's wife, assisted her in the work. Before her second marriage, Anandibai did not have to manage the kitchen continuously for a long time or to be solely responsible for the household work. For the first few weeks therefore, she found it very difficult to adapt herself to the new responsibilities, and during the period of pregnancy, she found it more difficult still. But she was not a woman to be frightened or discouraged. She handled everything skilfully and bore it cheerfully. When their first child, a son was born, Pandita Ramabai suggested that the boy may be named Shankar. Professor Karve liked it because it meant 'One who bestows happiness'.

It was no longer possible for Anandibai to devote herself to her studies, but she did not give them up altogether. For a time she attended the girls' school at Huzurpaga. After Shankar's birth, she had another confinement within eighteen months, but the child—it was a boy—did not live for more than twenty-four hours. After this she resumed her studies at Huzurpaga. Parvatibai Athavale, her younger sister, came to Poona about this time for her son's education. Parvatibai was a widow. At Professor Karve's suggestion, she also joined the Huzurpaga School.

One of Professor Karve's ideas was that every person, even a woman, should acquire some skill which would enable

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1. *haldi-kunku*: a social function held by women (who are not widows)

him or her to stand on his or her own legs if need arose. He, therefore, secured admission for Anandibai in the Dufferin Hospital at Nagpur to undergo a course in nursing and midwifery. Anandibai stayed in Nagpur for a year.

His marriage to a widow was the first step Professor Karve took in the field of social reform. He now felt within him a call to take up the work of educating public opinion in support of the cause of the marriage of widows and of doing everything possible to make it easy for those who were willing to take the step he had taken. He felt sad to see that although it was over forty years since the Widow Remarriage Act was passed, the number of such remarriages was very small. He, therefore, decided to make an organised effort in this direction. He wrote in his autobiography:

“The event of my practical step in the cause of widow marriage became the foundation of the humble work I have been able to do for our women. This responsible step made me feel that life was a more serious matter than I had taken it to be till then, that it had placed an imperative duty upon me and that my real work had only just begun. I wanted to try to do my utmost to prove myself worthy of the cause I had embraced. I realised at once that for a systematic and efficient working out of any plan a responsible body is necessary, and thought of organising a Widow Marriage Association.”<sup>1</sup>

Vishnushastri Pandit had started the Vidhava-vivahottejak Mandal, but it did not survive him. After Vishnushastri’s early death in 1875, the cause of the marriage of widows languished. There were earnest advocates like Mahadev Govind Ranade and Sadashivrao Kelkar, but they could not devote all their attention and time to the cause.

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1. *Looking Back*, p. 53

Mr. Wamanrao Kolhatkar of Vidarbha was an ardent supporter. With his help Professor Karve convened a meeting of sympathisers at Wardha On December 31, 1893. It was decided that whatever work they undertook should be free from complications and controversies as far as possible. They, therefore, excluded from their deliberations and the objects they framed for the new Widow Marriage Association founded by them problems such as inter-caste marriages or the different modes of having marriages solemnised. In a way, it was their wish to follow the line of least resistance. Professor Karve became the Secretary and Poona was selected as the headquarters of the Association which was fortunate enough to have Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar as its President. Membership of the Association was open only to those who had married widows or those who did not hesitate to dine with persons who had married widows. There was a separate class of sympathisers. A member or a sympathiser was to pay a day's income as his subscription.

One of the activities which the Association undertook immediately after it was started was a hostel for the children of re-married widows. This hostel was started in Professor Karve's house. The hostel did not continue long but the Association gave financial help to needy children born of remarriages of widows for many years after the hostel was closed down.

During his vacation, Professor Karve went on tours for popularising the objects of the Association. During these tours, he found that there were many persons who had sympathy for the cause.

The founder-members of the Association were seven. Among them were Mr. Kolhatkar of Vidarbha and Mr. Phadke of Hyderabad, Deccan. Mr. Kolhatkar had himself married a

widow, and had brought about several such marriages in Vidarbha. Phadke had chosen as his first bride the widowed daughter of Sadashivrao Govande of Poona. Bhaskarrao Govande, brother of Phadke's wife, had taken the initiative in bringing about his sister's second marriage and he was Professor Karve's third colleague in the work of the Widow Marriage Association.

The Association organised annual gatherings of the families of active supporters with a view to attracting public opinion. The first gathering was held in Poona in May 1894. Five families with a total number of twenty-two members attended. Among others who also were invited and who attended were Principal G.G. Agarkar, Professor C.G. Bhanu and Rao Bahadur C.N. Bhat. The gatherings were not held regularly every year, but whenever they were held in later years, they attracted a fairly large number of persons and were enthusiastically patronised. The practice of holding such gatherings was discontinued in later years, but the Widow Marriage Association took up the celebration of the Widow Remarriage Day on the 25th of July every year as on that date in 1856 the Widow Remarriage Act was passed.

With the zeal of a missionary, Professor Karve undertook tours. In December 1894, he went to Madras where the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held. On his way, he halted at Pandharpur and Sholapur. On his return journey he visited places like Hubli and Belgaum. At every place, he first established contacts with the prominent residents and then, with their help, had a public meeting arranged. He addressed the meetings and explained the purpose of his visit. Then he went from house to house to make collections. In 1895, he organised two tours, one in April and May and the other in September and October. Professor Karve spent very little during the tours. He generally travelled in the third class.

In 1895, the name of the Association was changed to 'The Association for the Removal of Restrictions to the marriage of Widows'. This change was suggested by Professor Karve himself who preferred it to the older one as he felt that it would be easier to win the sympathy of the society for the Association, if its object, as suggested by its name, was a more modest one—merely to remove restrictions that existed.

Professor Karve worked very hard for the Association for a few years. As he worked and as he met people in different places, he realised that the objections to the marriage of widows arose more out of the traditional way of looking at the reform. Most of those who opposed it did so on religious grounds. They could not give their wholehearted support because there was something deep-rooted in them which revolted. They could not explain what it was, but it was there, and with all the reasoning they could not get rid of it. As he pondered over this state of affairs, his thoughts turned to another handicap under which the widows were labouring. He began to think of taking up the more effective programme of the education of widows. Even a good many widows themselves who would not give a single thought to a proposal to marry again would heartily welcome the other proposal to avail themselves of opportunities to receive the benefits of education.

In the midst of his efforts to educate public opinion in favour of the reform he had nearest his heart, he kept a watchful eye to see if he could actually bring about the marriage of a widow. Whenever such a marriage took place he regarded it as a great achievement. During the remaining seven years of the last century, he was directly or indirectly instrumental in bringing about five widow marriages. At the last of these, the bride was his own niece, Manu. It was he who had induced Dada to give his daughter in marriage to a lad who was poor

but intelligent. Manu's husband, Bhiku Biwalkar, completed his education under Professor Karve's supervision, first in Bombay and then in Poona. By the time he passed his Matriculation Examination, Manu also completed her education and obtained the Third Year Certificate from the Women's Training College. Professor Karve tried and succeeded in getting jobs for Bhiku and Manu in Vidarbha. Before they could both go there to take up the jobs, Bhiku died. Manu went to *Deoolgaon* alone and served there for some years. In 1899, Professor Karve was able to induce his colleague in the Fergusson College, Professor G. C. Bhat, who had lost his first wife, to marry again. His marriage with Manu took place in Poona. Filled with overawing happiness at this event as Professor Karve was, his joy was still greater when he received on the day of the marriage and in the midst of the festivities the happy news of Raghunath Paranjpye's brilliant success at Cambridge. He had become a Senior Wrangler in the final Mathematics Tripos Examination.

While he was doing the work of the secretary of the Association for the Removal of Restrictions to the Marriage of Widows, Professor Karve was invited to give a talk on "Twenty-five years of the Widow Remarriage Movement" in Bombay in the Winter Lectures Series (Hemant-Vyakhyan Mala). The meeting was held in the Arya Samaj Mandir. The hall was filled to capacity. Mr. Justice Ranade was in the chair. Professor Karve spoke for about an hour. In the course of his talk, he emphasised the importance of the life of a householder (गृहस्थाश्रम) as the best and most desirable for a woman as well as a man. Celibacy (ब्रह्मचर्य) can be practised by very few, perhaps one in a thousand, he said, who accept the mission of serving humanity with undivided loyalty. It was, therefore, necessary, that perpetual widowhood should not be imposed

on any girl or woman whose natural inclination would be to seek once again an opportunity to assume the role of a housewife (गृहिणी). He did not speak like an orator, but he spoke with such earnestness and depth of feeling that his audience heard with rapt attention every word he uttered. When he sat down, a young man, Gajanan Bhaskar Vaidya, got up and began to address the meeting. In his speech he attacked those who, he thought, were responsible for the unsatisfactory progress of the movement, and his attack was mainly directed towards the Chairman of the meeting, Mr. Justice Ranade, who, instead of marrying a widow after the death of his first wife, had married a maiden of tender age. The speaker spoke with vehemence and his attack was vitriolic. Although what he was saying about Mr. Justice Ranade's second marriage could not be denied, the audience felt that he was overdoing it and became restless and was even excited when he repeated certain words with gestures again and again. When he sat down, Mr. Justice Ranade rose to speak. He was perfectly undisturbed and calm. With humility that added grace and charm to his words, the Chairman said that he agreed with every word of what the speaker who had preceded him said and he agreed with the speaker that Mr. Sadashivrao Kelkar who had taken a widow for a second wife should have been in the chair. He began with the words "We are lame and weak persons. So I say to my young friend: You lead us and we shall follow you with whatever strength and ability we possess in our frailty." Professor Karve's heart was moved to deep admiration as he heard these words. After the noble-hearted confession, Mr. Justice Ranade spoke for about half an hour and as he spoke, he held the audience spell-bound. When he sat down, the audience had completely forgotten what had happened before he rose to speak.

As years rolled on, Professor Karve continued to suffer on account of his second marriage and his advocacy of marriage of widows. What he felt most keenly was estrangement which was created and perpetuated between his relatives and himself. Dada could not send his son to Dhondu's house for his education in Poona, and so he kept him with Professor Paranjpye. Mother and Dada, when they came to Poona on their way to Pandharpur on a pilgrimage, did not stay with him. During her last illness his mother had asked everybody not to write to Dhondu about it. When he knew about it, it was, alas, too late. He reached Merud for the last *darshan* after everything was over. By this time, however, Professor Karve had trained his mind to maintain its equanimity against heavy odds. Often has he quoted the oft-quoted maxim which says that truly great are those whose hearts are delicate like the flowers and at the same time harder than the thunderbolt. There have been few great men whose mental attitude and demeanour are more akin to this maxim than that of Professor Karve.

## Anath Balikashram

After three years of ceaseless effort, it became clear to Professor Karve that the problem of the marriage of widows was not likely to be solved only by educating public opinion in favour of it. Opposition on religious grounds was the most formidable obstacle, and it came even from men whose minds were enlightened by modern education. But this was not the only obstacle. There were a large number of widows who could not make up their minds and many of them refused even to consider proposals for a second marriage. Among them were those who had children. It was natural that they thought of the future of their children before they thought of their own. Professor Karve had an instance of this type among his relatives. It was his sister-in-law, Anandibai's younger sister. Krishni was the name her parents gave her, but in later life she was known as Parvatibai—Parvatibai Athavale, widow of Mahadev Athavale. Krishni was married to Mahadev when she was eleven—an advanced age as it was considered in those days. Her husband was poor and lame of one foot, but her father did not mind his poverty or physical deformity, as in the midst of his own poverty it was impossible for him to find a more well-to-do or better-looking son-in-law. None knew what the girl herself thought of the proposal and nobody asked her. The proposal was presented to her parents by the wife of a Mamlatdar who thought of doing them a good turn and it was immediately accepted by them.

Parvatibai had a happy married life for nine years. She had three children of whom only the middle one lived. It was a boy and she gave him the name, Narayan. When Parvatibai was in her twentieth year, her husband died at Deorukh. Parvatibai continued to stay in her father's house with Nana, her two-year-old son.

The little boy could not understand why his mother looked so different now.

"Why do you wear this red saree, mother?" Nana asked her, "And what happened to your hair?"

"They have gone after your father, my child," Parvatibai answered, making a great effort to hold back her tears.

As Nana grew up, he became the centre of Parvatibai's desires and aspirations.

Parvatibai's elder sister, Baya (Godubai), who also was a widow—lived in Bombay with their brother. Later she joined Pandita Ramabai's Sharada Sadan. In 1893, she was married to Professor Karve. Baya's second marriage was a turning-point in Parvatibai's life also.

About twenty months after Baya's marriage, Parvatibai went to Poona with her parents on their way to Banaras on a pilgrimage.

"Why should Krishni go with you to Banaras?" Baya asked her parents, "Let her stay here with me. It is not advisable for her to go as she has her son to look after. A pilgrimage to Banaras is full of risks. If something happens to her during the journey the poor boy will be motherless."

Baba would have agreed but their mother protested. "I don't want her to be influenced by you and your example, Baya," her mother said, "I don't want her to take the wrong path as you have done and thus bring shame once again on the family."

Turning to Krishni, she continued: "Look here, my child, you can go back to Deorukh if you don't want to go with us, but if you stay here with your sister, I'll put an end to my life."

Parvatibai's parents proceeded to Banaras "without her. Baya tried to persuade her to stay with her in Poona, but she would not, as she had given her solemn promise to her mother. She returned to Deorukh with Nana.

Before long, however, it became necessary for Parvatibai to send Nana to Poona for his education. When she herself went to Poona six months later to see her son, she found that Professor Karve was full of the plans of starting Vidhavashram, a house for widows.

"What help will you give me if and when the Vidhavashram is opened?" he asked Parvatibai.

"I don't know," she answered, "but I think I can do the cooking."

It was clear to Professor Karve that his sister-in-law could not be persuaded to think of a second marriage. The only alternative was to give her facilities to learn and to educate her.

One of the persons for whom Professor Karve had great reverence was Pandita Ramabai, and he watched her work and the progress of her Sharada Sadan with admiration. In the transformation that had come over his wife, Baya, he could see what Pandita Ramabai could achieve and what possibilities an institution like the Sharada Sadan held. Within four years of its foundation, Sharada Sadan was able to attract more than sixty students, most of whom were widows. While so many came forward to take advantage of the facilities of education, the number of widows who found it possible to marry was

much smaller. Why not, then, take up the work of providing educational facilities for the widows? After all, the object was to enable them to have a new and happy life. If an effort was made to open and conduct an institution of the type of the Sharada Sadan, Professor Karve felt, it would yield the desired fruit more effectively and also more speedily.

Since July 1893, the Sharada Sadan had incurred the displeasure and wrath of most of its sympathisers. About twelve of its students were reported to have been converted to Christianity. The reports were soon confirmed and they spread all over Maharashtra like wildfire. The worst fears of Pandita Ramabai's critics and enemies had come true. Newspapers filled their columns with condemnation not only of what actually had happened but also of the motive of the founder of the Sharada Sadan who, it was argued and easily believed, had started it with no other object than that of swelling the numbers of Christian converts. The members of the Advisory Board of the Sadan headed by Dr. Bhandarkar withdrew their support from it and, in a joint statement which they issued, they warned the public that it would be dangerous for anyone to send his daughter or any other female relative to the Sharada Sadan.

A feeble attempt was made shortly after these happenings to found what the promoters would call a Hindu Sharada Sadan. The attempt succeeded hardly beyond the preliminary arrangements and fell through not for want of support but on account of the absence of competent workers.

In 1887, a Home for Widows was started in Bengal. Its founder was Babu Sasipada Bannerji and it was started at Baranagar, a place not far from Calcutta. A similar institution was started by Viresalingam Pantulu in Madras. Professor Karve had heard of these institutions and of the very slow

progress they had made on account of lack of proper organisation and adequate support. He was at the time engaged in his activities to promote the work of the Widow Marriage Association.

As he thought more and more of the poor success which he had in the promotion of the cause of marriage of widows, he began to feel that if efforts could be made to found and conduct an institution for the education of widows on more tactful lines avoiding the mistakes which had caused the failure of other institutions, an institution so founded would thrive and do solid work if persons inspired with zeal came forward to run it.

An undertaking of this kind must have adequate financial backing. Professor Karve knew this well, and it was not an easy task to collect funds which were necessary for the purpose. But he did not worry much about this problem. Difficult as it was, it was not insurmountable. He had faith in his heart and an irresistible desire pushed him on. His faith had by this time taught him to look upon all good work as, worthy of being undertaken, whatever the difficulty. He had also learnt not to be disappointed by failure, to overcome fears of failures if the cause was good and other channels could be opened.

In a letter which he wrote to the editor of the *Sudharak*, he explained all these points and gave an idea of the plan he had before him. It was a modest plan. He would begin with a small home for about five or six widows, but before that became possible, he would start an organisation for making provision for the board, lodging and education of that small number in the Girls' High School and its hostel. Even for such a modest beginning funds were necessary, and he offered a thousand rupees from his own savings.

“As long as I live,” he declared, “I shall myself add to the interest on this amount and whatever is required for the maintenance of just one widow, even if I find that financial help does not come forth from other sources. My faith in the goodness of men, however, is too great for me to imagine that such help would not be forthcoming at all. At any rate, I shall try and try earnestly with all my might, with all my faith and with all my soul.”

This letter appeared in the *Sudharak* on May 25, 1896. He pursued the matter still further by calling on June 14, 1896 a meeting of his friends who supported his plan. The meeting was held at the residence of Rao Bahadur V. M. Bhide. Sixteen persons were present. At the meeting it was resolved to found the ‘Anath Balikashram Association’. Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, whose advocacy for all reform movements and particularly those for raising the status of women was well known, was elected President of the Association or Mandali and Professor Karve himself became Secretary. His proposal of making an immediate beginning by providing accommodation in the hostel of the Girls’ High School for widows who applied for help was accepted.

On January 24, 1897, as Secretary, he submitted to the Mandali the following report :—

“Dhondo Keshav Karve went on a collection tour for two months and a quarter. He visited Bombay, Thana, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Akola and Amaraoti. The collections made in these places and in Poona itself have enabled the new institution to provide all educational facilities including lodging and boarding for seven widows, and on the day the report is submitted to leave a balance of Rs. 3,200-14-11.”

At the end of 1897, the Mandali had a balance of Rs. 5,633.71.

Nothing succeeds like success. When the members of the Mandali met to consider and adopt the report for the year, it was decided that the time was now favourable for undertaking the project of having a building and an establishment of its own for future activities and their expansion. It was, however, resolved that instead of utilising the balance for this purpose, a separate collection should be undertaken. This was Professor Karve's own suggestion and it was accepted by all the other members.

How was he to undertake this task of collecting funds for the new scheme? Even he was not sure of collecting a sufficient amount, but that did not matter. God helps those who help themselves. He had already given a thousand rupees from his own savings when the Mandali was founded, and he had nothing more to give. There was, however, his life insurance policy of five thousand rupees. He could raise a loan on it.

The most formidable difficulty, however, was not that of finance. No suitable site was available for the building. It was, therefore, not immediately necessary for him to use his insurance policy as a security for taking a loan.

That was a good thought—that of making use of his insurance policy for the Mandali's work. Professor Karve would not let go in vain any opportunity of devoting whatever he had for a good cause. He would surely do something about this proposal which, he felt, was too good to be dropped only because there was no immediate need. An institution like the one he had founded would always need financial help. He could therefore utilise the life insurance policy to make provision for a future occasion.

The thought and urge were good, but he was afraid the urge might lose its sharpness if he did not act immediately.

He could bind himself by taking a pronouncement and a promise.

Standing before a small audience at Nagpur where he had gone for collecting funds, he declared his intention of assigning the policy to the Balikashram.

“Friends, this is my intention and I wish to act upon it,” he said, “and if you find that I have not given effect to it, I want you to do me a favour. I want you to chastise me, humiliate me for being false to my promise.”

On April 18, 1899, Professor Karve handed over the policy to the trustees of the Ashram after assigning it to the Ashram. In the annual report of the Ashram for that year, it is recorded as a “gift from a gentleman”.

The same year, the Anath Balikashram was started as an institution in a house which was rented in Sadashiv Peth near Peru Gate. The house belonged to Mr. Gore. Professor Karve shifted his own residence to the same house.

It was Professor Karve’s desire that the Ashram should not be situated in the heart of the city. Rao Bahadur Gokhale offered him a piece of land at Hingne. It was not accepted immediately as the members of the Mandali found it unsuitable for many reasons. During the outbreak of the plague epidemic in 1899, however, it became necessary for the Mandal to shift the Ashram temporarily to Mr. Gokhale’s farm-house at Hingne. Having conducted the Ashram in Mr. Gokhale’s house for four months, Professor Karve began to feel that it would be much better to have it at Hingne permanently than shift it back to Sadashiv Peth and the crowded surroundings. The project was taken up and in June 1900, a cottage was constructed. It cost only five hundred rupees.

There were at this time eight widows in the Ashram and there were two more inmates who were unmarried girls.

Narrnadabai, elder sister of Radhabai, Professor Karve's first wife, who lived with them in Bombay during Radhabai's illness and had gone back to Poona after his second marriage. She now returned and gladly accepted the work of supervising the kitchen and looking after the comforts of the girls. A retired teacher took up the work of teaching them. Professor Karve himself continued to have his home in the old rented place—Gore's Wada. After his work at the college, Professor Karve came home, had a hurried dinner, and then went to Hingne. In the evening and in the early hours of the morning he gave lessons to the girls. At about eight in the morning, he returned to Poona to begin another day's work at the college.

While her husband had all his time thus taken up by the college and the Ashram at Hingne, Baya managed the home and the children almost single-handedly in their Poona residence. It made her sad sometimes to think of her lonely life. In her moments of sadness, she used to wonder why her husband at all thought of the second marriage if he was to lead a life like this, devoting all his attention to the activities of the Ashram. Dinkar, their second son, was six months old at the time. She was not in good health. Frequent attacks of fever had made her very weak. It was not possible for her to have a Brahmin woman to assist her in her work, for none would work in the house of a widow who had married again. Baya had not forgotten the valuable lesson her old teacher, Pandita Ramabai, had taught her. She thought of befriending the friendless, those whom society looked upon as out-castes. They found shelter in her house and were of some help to her.

It is strange that Baya should have found fault with the way her husband was engaging himself in activities outside the pale of the responsibility of rearing the family. Was she not doing the same? Her health was not equal even to the

limited duties of the household. Still she took under her roof the poor, the homeless and the helpless. She gave them not only shelter and protection but all that a home stands for. When a woman who had returned from Pandharpur had allowed herself to be caught in a difficult situation, Baya was worried not only about the girl, but also about the reputation of the Ashram her husband was conducting. It was an institution for widows. If it became known that a girl staying in Baya's house which the people identified with the Ashram her husband was conducting, had gone astray, it would be a calamity which the management would find it hard to face. Baya was aware of all this. She handled the situation with care and tact and saw that the name of the Ashram was not tarnished. Professor Karve's wife, by adding to her own responsibilities such cares and worries, was only supplementing the good work he was doing. She bore them all patiently and even gladly. Her husband's example and the training she had from Pandita Ramabai inspired and sustained her.

With all his mind devoted to the work of the Balikashram, Professor Karve hardly ever thought of the hardships he had to suffer. They were many and varied. Every evening, he walked from Poona to Hingne, a distance of about six km. The road was extremely bad and during the rains it was full of mud. But he never worried about the bad condition of the road or the fatigue of walking, for he knew that the workers and inmates of the Ashram would be disappointed if he did not go there even on One day. All the way he carried a good load on his back—the provisions to be carried from Poona to Hingne. The smile on the happy, innocent faces of the girls who greeted him showed how anxiously they had been waiting for him. In a moment he would forget all the fatigue of the journey, all the worries of the day.

Professor Karve was not so indifferent to the problems of his own family, as Baya sometimes thought. Whenever someone was ill, his mind was torn between the cares of the home and the work he had undertaken which made it necessary for him to go to Hingne. With a heavy heart, and sometimes with tears coming out of his eyes, he answered the stern call of duty. Not without a biting conscience did he leave his home for Hingne on an evening when he knew well that his presence would have been of help to his wife and would have given her strength and courage. But he could make no distinction between the family of his home—his wife and children—and the larger family at Hingne. He wrote in his autobiography:

“The open space round the temporary hut was covered with thorny bushes and trees as also with sharp stones and the girls had to go through them to fetch water from the canal about a furlong off. The hut was not quite rain-proof and we had sometimes actually to cover ourselves with mats to ward off the water leaking from the roof. During the rains the path was full of mud, but mud or no mud, I went there day after day and month after month for nearly two years, except during vacations, with very few interruptions. It was a labour of love with me and I never felt the fatigue of it. The real hardship that I felt sometimes was when my wife or a child was ill at home and I had to leave them to take care of themselves and go away to the Widows’ Home, my adopted child, which was dearer to me than myself or my kith and kin. Whenever there was a conflict of duties, I always decided in favour of the institution, whichever it was. It has often pained me to the utmost to see my wife or children suffer for my neglect of them. But I could not help it. There were occasions when, with tears in my eyes, I would wend my steps towards the Widows’ Home. Sometimes there was a difficulty of another kind. A girl in the Home would fall ill and then my anxiety

knew no bounds. I always tried to comfort and cheer up the others. Any unfortunate occurrence in the early stages would have given a terrible shock to the institution. But all is well that ends well. The early inmates of the Home appreciated what was being done for them and faced all difficulties and inconveniences with courage. Those times of trial were over and it was finally decided to go in for a permanent building on the site.”

It was singularly fortunate for the founder of the Balikashram that his sister-in-law, Parvatibai, who had come to visit her son, Nana, in 1902, did not return to Deorukh to her parents. To Professor Karve’s question, she had given the answer that all she could do for the institution he was thinking of founding was to look after the kitchen, but he had a different plan for her. He knew she was capable of doing better things. She had come to Poona some months before the Ashram was started. So he suggested that she might get herself trained as a teacher. He tried and succeeded in obtaining for her a monthly scholarship from Government. The Director of Public Instruction was kind enough to release her from the condition of having to serve in a Government school at least for three years, and her services were made available for the Balikashram.

While she was at the Training College, Parvatibai used to go to Hingne on Saturdays and spend the Sundays there. On Saturday evenings she walked by the side of Professor Karve and listened to his words. He described to her the pitiable condition of women in the country and of widows in particular. She pondered over every word he uttered and gradually made up her mind to devote her life to the cause he had undertaken. Those walks and the words she heard gave her better training than she was able to have at the Training College.

Dinkar was about four years old now. His father proposed that they might all go and stay at Hingne. Baya readily accepted the proposal. They had a cart drawn by a bullock which made the daily journey to Poona and back easier. One day, however, as Professor Karve and Shankar were going to Poona, the cart overturned on the Lakdi Bridge. Professor Karve himself escaped with minor injuries but Shankar had a heavy shaking. Baya cursed herself for having accepted the proposal to change their place of residence.

At Hingne, the Karve family had their meals at the common mess. Baya joined the other workers and did most of the work by turns. The other workers learnt from her how to practise economy in everything. She would have liked to do more responsible jobs but she was pained to see that others did not think much of her ability. She had confidence in her own competence and ability. And was she not the wife of the founder of the Balikashram? There was something else that gave her still greater pain. She was a widow at one time and had married a second time. The workers and even the inmates of the Ashram could not forget this fact. They would not accept water touched by her. She had to sit in a separate row at meal-time. She knew that her husband who willingly accepted all these distinctions and restrictions would not give her his sympathy and would not even listen to her. She therefore kept her sorrows to herself and suffered silently. There were occasions which would have roused the indignation of any other person, but she tried to control herself.

Professor Karve knew what his wife suffered, and secretly admired her fortitude. As years rolled on, he realised more and more what a blessing his wife was. Sometimes he was pained to see what and how much she had to bear, but he had the satisfaction that she bore it well. His satisfaction and

delight were greater still when he saw her in the midst of the poor needy people who came to their house at Narayan Peth and to whom she gave the little food that was left over. She gave them butter milk of which she had plenty, and old clothes. Among those who received the little gifts from her and blessed her were the *mahars* and *dhangars* and others who were looked upon by the high-caste people of the locality as untouchables. Baya treated them with the same tenderness which she bestowed on her sons.

## Successes and Trials

**A**s Professor Karve lay in his narrow bed, he thought about the future, not his own, but that of the Ashram.

It was a few days after he and his son were thrown out of the cart on the Lakdi Bridge. The injuries he had sustained would not allow him to move about, much less to undertake a journey, for some time. He should have gone on his usual tour for collecting donations for the Ashram. While he sorrowfully thought of the programme which was upset; the other person in the room, Parvatibai, who was there to nurse him, had the same thoughts in her mind. She was thinking of finding some way to relieve him of his anxiety. As she sat near the bed, pondering over her thoughts, an idea occurred to her.

“Anna,” she said, disturbing the silence of the room, “I have an idea. If you give me permission, I should like to go out this time for collecting donations.”

“You don’t mean it, do you?” Anna asked her with astonishment in his voice and expression.

“I do,” Parvatiba; replied in a confident tone’, “and I have a plan to place before you.”

“Let me hear it at least,” said Anna a little unconcernedly. He still thought that it was too difficult a task for a woman like Parvatibai to undertake.

“One of the girls in the Ashram will soon be going to Khandwa for the holidays. She has a free railway pass and it

entitles her to take a servant with her. She will be only very glad to allow me to travel with her."

Anna kept quiet. He was overwhelmed with the earnestness in her resolve and her voice. He began to realise that there was something reasonable in what she was saying.

"If I go with this girl," Parvatibai continued, "there will be no expenses and so even if I am not able to collect anything, the Ashram will not be put to a loss on my account."

Anna gave his consent. He was much relieved to see that some work would be done during the summer holidays although he was unable to go out.

Parvatibai was very glad to have the opportunity. She made all the preparations for the journey, but on the night before the day of their departure, Nana, her son, had fever. The temperature rose to 104°F. How could she leave her son in that condition? She felt particularly sorry that she would not be able to keep the promise she had given to Anna.

"What shall I do now, Anna ?" she asked him, "Can I leave Nana in this condition ?"

"It's for you to decide. But I can tell you this; even if you go, Venubai Or Kashibai will take care of Nana and you need not worry."

Venubai Namjoshi and Kashibai Deodhar were the two life-workers who had joined the Ashram.

With an unhesitating mind, Parvatibai decided to entrust her son to the care of her colleagues, and went to Khandwa with the girl.

At Khandwa she met some of the residents. A middle-aged widow dressed in the red saree going round and meeting people was an unusual sight for them. When she told them that she would like to address a meeting, they would not

believe her. Some of them were even unlined to ridicule her. At last, an *Inamdar* agreed to give her an opportunity. She went to his house in the evening when some of his friends met for a chat over *pan supari*<sup>1</sup>. There were about twelve gentlemen in the drawing-room of the house. None of them took notice of Parvatibai as she entered the room. She began her speech and, without waiting to see if they were listening to her, went on. After she had finished, she sent round a piece of paper. To her pleasant surprise, she found that she had been able to collect thirteen rupees. From Khandwa she went to Indore where she had a better reception. When she returned to Hingne after completing her tour, she was able to hand over to Anna a collection of five hundred rupees. Anna was filled with joy at the success which she had in her first venture.

For a year or two after she joined the Ashram, Parvatibai worked as Superintendent of the Ashram, but since her successful visit to Khandwa, Professor Karve utilised her services almost exclusively for collection work. During their visit to Banaras he was able to see for himself how eminently fitted she was for the work. People from different parts of the country had gathered there for the Social Conference. As they were engaged in important deliberations it would be useless, Professor Karve thought, to speak to them about their small venture. Parvatibai could not bear the idea of going back empty-handed. She went to the delegates camp and, making use of the broken Hindi she could speak, she created interest and sympathy for their cause in the delegates from Bengal and other places. They promised to give her a few minutes at night. She prepared Kashibai Deodhar to say a few things in English. They were able to collect about forty rupees.

In a distant corner of Rajputana there was the native state of Tonk. Mr. Damodarpant Phatak of Poona had served in the

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1. *pan supari* : betel leaves and betel nuts

Tonk State for many years. After his retirement, Damodarpant wished to devote the remaining years of his life to some public cause. While he was thinking about the best way in which he could serve the public, his eldest son who had become a doctor died of plague. This sorrow darkened the old man's life and his immediate thought was to console his poor young daughter-in-law who had so suddenly lost her husband and to provide for her and for the fatherless children. Even in the midst of sorrow, however, the thought of doing some social work did not leave him.

On the third day after his son's death, he went to Professor Karve, who had just started the Balikashram at Hingne. They had not met before. Professor Karve had gone out. Damodarpant left his name and address. Next day, Professor Karve himself went to his house. Damodarpant introduced himself and after telling him of his sorrow, he said he would like to see the Ashram. A visit was arranged. Mr. Phatak who spent about four hours at the Balikashram felt much comforted, and when he returned, he told Yashodabai, his wife, of what he had seen at Hingne. Then he paid three visits to the Ashram with Yashodabai. On each occasion, they found much solace for their grieving hearts. There was something in the world which could replace personal anxieties and anguish, they felt. For the founder of the Ashram, they began to have great admiration. The desire to help him became so irresistible that, one day, the two brought to him a sum of five hundred rupees and begged of him to accept it as their humble gift to the Ashram.

"We had saved this amount for a pilgrimage to Sri Rameshwar," Damodarpant said, "but Yashodabai and I now think that it could serve a better cause if you will kindly accept it for the good work you are doing."

Professor Karve saw the light that brightened the faces of the two. His heart was full of gratitude and he could not utter a word. In their kindness he found new strength to carry on the work he had just undertaken. At the moment, and because of the piety which had prompted the gift, its value was infinitely greater than the number of coins it contained.

During the Diwali holidays in 1903, Professor Karve had two unexpected visitors. One of them was Mr. Sitaram Narayan Pandit of Rajkot. Professor Karve had met him once at one of the sessions of the Social Conference. Having regard for Mr. Pandit's, generosity, he had sought a few minutes to tell him about the Ashram. He invited Mr. Pandit to visit the Ashram, but he did not think Mr. Pandit would remember the invitation a few hours after it was extended. The visit, therefore, was a very pleasant surprise. The other person was Mr. Pandit's nephew, Mr. Narayan Bhaskar Pandit, whom Karve knew.

A few days after the visit, Karve received a cheque for three hundred rupees from Mr. Sitaram Narayan Pandit. In a letter which accompanied the cheque, the donor took care to ask Karve to let him know whenever he was in need .or in difficulty.

He soon found that Mr. Pandit was not a man who would wait until a needy man went to him for help. An institution like the Anath Balika shram would, he knew, always be in need of help for the expansion of its activities as well as for its routine work. He did not allow many days to pass before he sent another amount of fifty rupees saying that he wished to send the same amount every month. When, in 1904, the plan for the new building was finalised, Mr. Pandit sent a donation of a thousand rupees. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, Karve wrote to thank Mr. Pandit. In his reply Mr. Pandit wrote:

“It is you who deserve my warm and grateful thanks for giving me this excellent opportunity to spend my money for a good cause.”

In 1904, the annual session of the Indian Social Conference was held in Bombay. By this time, Parvatibai Athavale’s work for the Balikashram, and particularly her collection tours, had established her reputation as a social worker. She was asked to address the Conference and she was glad to have the opportunity. For a long time she had felt very strongly about certain Western fashions and modes of behaviour which a large number of gentlemen and ladies had adopted and spread under the garb of reform. Her views were quite definite and clear. With an uncommon boldness that astounded the large gathering of educated men and women who called themselves reformers, she told them to beware of blind and thoughtless adoption of Western customs which, she warned them, were doing Indian society incalculable harm. All that was needed, she added, was a cautious and careful adaptation of the Western customs and habits, cutting out all that lacked decency that was foreign to our own culture.

Mrs. Athavale’s speech created a wild sensation. There were many who regarded it as a personal affront. The students and young men and women who were present wildly cheered her and even before she sat down started making collections on her behalf for the Ashram.

With his natural disposition not to hurt anyone and to avoid harsh words even though they conveyed the truth, Professor Karve was pained and could not help feeling that Parvatibai should have spoken with more tact and restraint. The effects of Parvatibai’s onslaught against what she called the mistaken notions of reform and the growing tendency to ape Western ways lingered for a long time. The newspapers

violently attacked her, and Professor Karve received representations from well-wishers calling upon him to remove Parvatibai from the position she held in the Ashram. Professor Karve knew how to deal with representations and criticism of this kind. He gave everybody an assurance that the matter would be carefully considered by those who conducted the Ashram.

A Gujarati well-wisher of the Balikashram offered a donation of two thousand and five hundred rupees. The conditions he suggested were that the amount should be spent on the construction of a small temple and a hospital for infectious diseases like plague. There would be no difficulty in having or maintaining a hospital. The idea of the temple was a good one in itself, but its maintenance was not an easy matter. Most of the inmates of the Ashram were widows who had kept their hair. According to tradition, the water or other articles of worship touched by the hands of such widows would be considered impure for worship. Professor Karve therefore politely suggested that there may be some modification. Mr. N. T. Vaidya who acted as the intermediary told Professor Karve that the donor would accept the modification. After some time, however, the donor suddenly changed his mind and withdrew the offer for reasons which were not disclosed. The orthodox Press, however, found in the withdrawal sufficient cause to attack the institution which, it was their belief and argument, was doing harm to religion.

As the work of the Balikashram grew and became more complicated and strenuous. Professor Karve began to think of devoting all his time and attention to it. He therefore asked the Deccan Education Society of which he was a life member to allow him to retire. Instead of accepting his plea, the Society gave him the alternative to go on long leave. Leave for three

years without pay was sanctioned. From the beginning of 1904, he began to give all his time to the development of the Ashram. In less than a year, however, he found it unnecessary to be away from the college. Parvatibai and two other women workers had taken up the work of the Ashram by then. While Parvatibai took up the work of making collections, the other two, Kashibai Deodhar and Venubai Namjoshi, stayed at the Ashram and supervised its working in all its departments. It was these three life-workers who did most of the spade work and thereby laid ,the solid foundation of the Ashram.

Kashibai Deodhar joined the Ashram as a life-worker in 1904, but her connection with the institution was much older. She was one of those who had helped in its management in the early days when it had no house of its own. She was a child-widow and had spent her early years of widowhood in the Sharada Sadan. Another widow who had her early training at the Sharada Sadan and later joined Professor Karve's Balikashram was Venubai Namjoshi whose home was in Amaraoti. Her cousin, Principal G. G. Agarkar of the Fergusson College, brought her to Poona and in the Sharada Sadan and gave her all the comfort and encouragement she needed in those difficult days. Both Kashibai Deodhar and Venubai Namjoshi did the administrative work and served as Lady Superintendents of the Ashram.

At no time in its history did the institution founded by Annasaheb Karve feel the want of women workers. He was able to realise his ideal of having institutions for the welfare of women managed by themselves. All his earliest colleagues and helpmates were women. The example of the three pioneer workers was followed by others. Among these was Krishnabai Phalke who did valuable work as store-keeper and supervisor of the kitchen. There were three more to whom the Ashram

and its founder were equally grateful for contributing to its early growth, Banutai Deshpande, Anandibai Marathe and Durgabai Kirloskar left their mark on the history of the Ashram and on the grateful memory of Anna, the founder.

It was no wonder that those who belonged to the orthodox camp took delight in attacking the Anath Balikashram and its founder whenever they could. One of the worst things they did was to describe the Balikashram as a factory where raw material for the marriage of widows was manufactured. Professor Karve did not think much of such attacks and ridicule. His attitude towards such critics and adversaries was one of wise and cautious indifference. He refrained from giving replies or explanations. But there were a few rare occasions when he found it necessary to make his position clear. The *Chikitsak*, a newspaper from Belgaum, published a letter signed by ‘Punarvivahit’, on August 16, 1905. Ever since the Anath Balikashram was founded and its attitude of neutrality towards the subject of the marriage of widows became sufficiently known, Professor Karve became the object of criticism of a few reformers also. It was argued by them that the very act of founding the Ashram was a reactionary step as its founder had given up the work he had been doing to popularise the cause of the marriage of widows. It was Professor Karve’s conviction that the Ashram would thrive only if its activities were not allowed to be mixed up even remotely with the subject of remarriage. The Balikashram was founded for nothing more and nothing less than the specific object of providing educational facilities to widows. There was far greater opposition to the marriage of widows than to their education. The early history of the Sharada Sadan of Pandita Ramabai and that of the campaign he had himself carried on for the Widow Marriage Association had proved this fact beyond doubt. If an effort was made, even indirectly,

to encourage the inmates of the Ashram to marry again, considerable harm would be done to its main cause, for there were those who did not mind having their widowed daughters or sisters educated, but they would not have liked to consider the question of getting them married again. The path pursued by Professor Karve was the path of wise caution. He never identified himself with any negotiations or efforts to bring about the marriage of an inmate of the Ashram. If the marriage of an inmate took place even after she left the Ashram, he would not attend it if it was to take place against the wishes of her parents or other elders.

Some of his best friends who were supporters of the cause of the marriage of widows found it difficult to understand him or, if they did, to agree with him. If the cause was a good one, it must be supported. Professor Karve was one of its earliest supporters. In fact, his was one of the earliest, if not the first of the marriages of its kind in Poona. That he should give it up in favour of another cause was, according to them, an act of desertion if not of treachery. Some of them even went so far as to allege that Professor Karve now felt sorry for having taken the step and would have retraced it if that was possible.

‘Punarvivahit’ who wrote in the *Chikitsak* of Belgaum put forth all these arguments at length and in words which had the sharpness of arrows. He accused Professor Karve of having two consciences or a split conscience.

“Is it your intention, Professor,” the writer went on to ask, “that the widows who are admitted to your Ashram should be trained to be teachers or nurses or tailors or some such workers so that they may, in due, course, go out into the society to be servants or attendants to their more fortunate sisters who have a home with a husband and children ?”

He gave Professor Karve the following challenge:

If you now consider that the marriage of widows is a sin, you should have the goodness and be bold enough to say so."

His main charge was:

"You behave in a way which gives the impression to the inmates of your Ashram that it is a sin to marry again. Do not your assistants tell them so in so many words?"

The writer lamented the fact that he who began with the foundation of the Vidhava-vivahottejak Mandal had now descended, step by step, by changing the name of that associations to a tamer one, and then by founding the Vidhavasadan for the specific and exclusive purpose of educating widows.

Perhaps Professor Karve would have connived at the letter which appeared in the *Chikitsak*, but he could not ignore the repercussions it had. He was particularly pained to find its echoes in the *Sudharak* of Poona and the *Subodha Patrika* of Bombay. The *Sudharak* stressed the necessity of administering an effective rebuke to persons like Professor Karve whose advocacy of the attitude of neutrality was, according to it, not understandable.

The reply Professor Karve gave to his critics appeared in the *Sudharak* on April 6, 1906, about eight months after the appearance of 'Punarvivahit's' letter in the *Chikitsak*. It was written with forbearance and restraint.

"In my initial work for the cause of the marriage of widows, I have humbly and earnestly tried to follow the same path which was adopted by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in Calcutta and Vishnushastri Pandit on our side. Today this work is being ably done by a number of my friends for whom I have the highest respect. I have not, by even so much as a

single word or act, done anything to throw obstacles in their path. At the same time, I humbly submit, it is open for anyone to take up the work or the activity which he considers would be most beneficial for the welfare of the society.”

Referring to the two movements of the marriage of widows and that of their education, he wrote:

“It is my considered and firm opinion that the cause of the education of widows will prosper only if it is kept, entirely aloof from the work which is, being done for the marriage of widows. The idea of founding a home for widows was first sponsored by the Widow Marriage Association, but after careful consideration it was decided to have the two movements entirely independent of each other.”

He humbly admitted that he had to give up the work of the Widow Marriage Association when he took up the work of the Balikashram, but he assured his critics that ultimately the education of widows would be found to be a greater cause than their remarriage.

There was no further correspondence on this subject in the Press, but some years later, in 1911, a patron of the Anath Balikashram called upon the Management of the Ashram to set aside its attitude of neutrality towards the question of the marriage of widows and say clearly whether it supported the cause or opposed it. His letter was considered by the Managing Committee of the Balikashram on June 21, 1911, and the following resolution was unanimously passed:

“The Hindu Widows’ Home is a strictly educational institution and, as such, its attitude towards the question of widow remarriage can only be one of absolute neutrality. The Committee, however, is of the opinion that when it is settled by the guardians of a widow that she should be married, and active steps have begun to be taken, it is desirable, that such

guardians should withdraw the girl from the Home in consideration of the disturbing influence which the matter is bound to exercise on the minds of the other girls in the Home."

The decision taken by Professor Karve and his colleagues of the Hindu Widows' Home Association was greater and more far-reaching than even they could have imagined. Had the founder of the Ashram stuck to the Widow Marriage Association, he would have perhaps been instrumental in bringing about a few more remarriages. His giving up of that work did not make much difference. On the other hand, the Balikashram which he founded in 1896 proved to be the seed, so small as that of a banyan tree, from which has grown a mighty tree which has sent out its branches far and wide and has become one of the wonders of modern India. Rightly has the founder universally been acclaimed as a Maharshi, a great seer who, in those days: of darkness, could peer far into the future and see the vision of a better day, not for a handful of widows who could have been persuaded to accept a second marriage but for vast numbers of them who have received the benefits of education and have now acquired independent positions of honour in various spheres.

On the whole, the early history of the Anath Balikashram has been a story of unhampered progress. There were great difficulties to be overcome and Herculean tasks to be accomplished, but for all these, selfless workers came forward in unbroken succession and, above all, Professor Karve himself became the source of light and comfort for all of them.

During the early years of its history, Professor Karve had the honour and pleasure of receiving distinguished visitors—a large number of them. Gandhiji was one of these. Among others were Maharajas and Rajas, Governors and their wives, statesmen and administrators, and social workers. There

was, however, one visit which he remembered with greater joy and pride than any other. In 1902, his mother and elder brother Dada had come to Poona on their way back home from Pandharpur. They did not stay in his house but paid a visit to the Ashram. Tears of joy rolled down the cheeks of both as they saw the good work Dhondu had started and was doing so admirably. These tears gave him the satisfaction that after all he had not lost their goodwill and that his work was worthy of the blessings of the two persons to whom he owed most of what had contributed to his spiritual growth.

That was Dada's first visit to the Ashram but not the last one. Twelve years later, he visited it again. Ambatai was with him this time. Professor Karve's maternal uncle and aunt, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye's parents, also came to see the Ashram at the same time. To see all four of them in the Ashram and hear words of satisfaction and compliment uttered by them was something which Professor Karve could not easily compare with any other achievement of his life.

## The Mahila Vidyalaya

**A**s the Ashram was growing and becoming more stable, its founder was reaching the age of fifty. Professor Karve had enough work as the life-worker of the Deccan Education Society and as the director of the Ashram to keep him busy during all his waking hours. As his work in the Ashram grew, he began to wonder whether, as a consequence, his work at the college was being neglected. He did not worry about what others thought of it, but he was anxious that he should be able to return in full what he was receiving from the Deccan Education Society. If he did not, he had no right to continue as an active member. The Ashram was demanding more and more of his attention and energies. Did that not mean that it was not possible for him to do justice to the responsibilities he owed to the Society? The idea of retiring from the Society began to enter his mind once again. He spoke to Baya but she would not listen to him.

“You have your sons whose future you have to take care of,” she said: “How will you be able to manage if you retire before completing twenty years? You won’t be entitled to the pension if you retire now. You may not need the pension for your own needs, but I need it for the education of my three sons. You don’t expect the Ashram to look after your wife and children. It is not proper for you to neglect your family even for the sake of the Ashram.”

When he spoke to the other members of the Society, they refused to allow him to retire. They had given him in 1904 the alternative of taking three years' leave.

All these years Baya had been able to relieve her husband of most of the worry and anxiety of rearing the family. There were occasions when she felt sad, and at times she was angry, to think of his indifference towards his sons. Sometimes the boys came home from school sad and a little excited over what must have happened at the school. They complained to their mother that they did not have fine clothes to wear or were not able to play games or enjoy the amusements as other boys did. Why did they have none of these good things? Baya's heart was grieved to hear them but she gave them comfort by asking them to think of the poorer boys and remember how much better their own lot was than that of those boys.

"It isn't clothes or luxuries that make a person great," Baya said to console them. "Your father does not earn a very good income, but he does a lot of good work. He wants you to complete your education before you are twenty. When you grow up, and when you begin to earn, you will be able to enjoy better things than you do now."

Baya looked after the home and the children and, therefore, Professor Karve was able to work with greater intensity and to have room in his mind not only for thoughts of the progress of the Ashram but also for fresh proposals for widening the scope of the mission he had undertaken.

The Anath Balikashram was founded primarily for the benefit of widows. It had, however, become necessary for the Management to admit unmarried girls also. In 1899, a gentleman from Ratnagiri wrote to Professor Karve asking him if he could admit his three daughters of the ages 14, 12 and 10. He wrote:

“The eldest is a widow. If I send her alone to the Ashram, it would be difficult for me to get suitable husbands for the others soon, and then they would have to remain idle at home. I know I shall not be able to pay adequately for the boarding, lodging and education of all the three, but I do want to see that they are educated. Please advise me in the matter.”

Professor Karve’s curiosity was roused. He went to see the gentleman and his daughters, and was pleased to find that all the three were intelligent and full of promise. He at once decided to admit them but on one condition. He told their father that he should not consider any proposal about their marriage till they were eighteen. The condition was readily accepted, and in the beginning of 1900, the two younger girls accompanied their eldest sister who was a widow and were admitted to the Ashram.

This was the beginning, and in the years which followed, the number of girls who were not widows steadily increased. In 1900, it was two, and at the end of 1906, it had risen to nineteen in a total of seventy-five. The Management of the Ashram had then to make a rule that the number of unmarried girls or those who were not widows should not exceed one-fourth the total number of inmates.

This decision was in conformity with the purpose with which the Ashram was founded. Professor Karve could raise no objection. Still it made him sad to think of the fairly large number of applications from unmarried girls which had to be rejected. Each application so rejected, he thought, meant the denial of an opportunity to a girl who wished to have education and live a better life. The times were changing and more and more girls were coming out of the narrow confines of their homes to seek the benefits of education. There was the Girls’ School at Huzurpaga and there was also the Female Training College, but the number of girls who wished to learn was

greater than these institutions could admit. Besides, the public had by now learnt to look at the educational work of the Balikashram with greater appreciation. The education given in this institution was not only less expensive but, as many thought, was also of a higher quality and of a more useful type.

The constitution of the Anath Balikashram had in it a provision for the admission of unmarried girls and those whose husbands were living if it did not come in the way of serving the main object of giving educational facilities to widows.

Professor Karve gave his anxious thought to all these circumstances and facts for many days. As a result, he felt with increasing conviction that the Anath Balikashram should have a sister institution where provision for the lodging and boarding of girls and married women who were not widows could be separately made. It was not necessary to make additional provision for their education as they could be admitted to the School which the Ashram was running.

In a letter dated January 31, 1907, which he circulated among the members of the Managing Committee of the Balikashram, Professor Karve explained his views and proposals in detail and clearly pointed out that the new venture, if undertaken, would in no way hamper the growth and progress of the Balikashram. On the contrary, as he explained at length, the new institution would yield a good many advantages to the older one. One of the main advantages would be that the Ashram would command greater sympathy from the public not only widows but other girls and women also were able to receive the benefits of education under its roof. He anticipated that the members of the Managing Committee would not be willing to undertake an additional financial burden and so he offered to shoulder it himself.

The proposals contained in the circular letter were considered at a meeting of the Committee held on February 6, and after a long discussion it was resolved that as the proposal did not fall within the purview of the objects of the Ashram, it should not be accepted. The Committee, however, suggested that Professor Karve himself might start an independent and separate institution for the purpose, if he so wished.

The Committee's decision filled Professor Karve's heart with great disappointment, but he could not blame its members. They had the interest of the Ashram at heart. In taking the decision, they were actuated by those interests and their responsibility to guard them. At the same time, he felt that the opportunity to serve the cause of reform which the circumstances presented was too precious to be missed. He was not to be held back. He welcomed the Committee's decision as a call and as a challenge. Did the decision not mean that if he wished to move forward, he should do it alone? It did, and he meant to go forward alone.

On March 14, 1908, the *Times at India* published an article from an Englishman, Major Hunter Steen. One of the sentences in the article read as follows :

“In a small house in Narayan Peth, Poona City not far from Lakdi Pool, is to be found the modest beginning, at least on this side of India, of what will one day prove the social regeneration of the country.”

In these prophetic words, Major Hunter Steen described the Mahila Vidyalaya, founded by Dhondo Keshav Karve, which at that time was just a year old.

On Rangapanchami day, which was the fourth of March in 1907, the Mahila Vidyalaya was founded with six girls. The Deccan Education Society was gracious enough to allow

Professor Karve to use for the Vidyalaya their old but spacious *wada* near Lakdi Bridge. Three of the six girls belonged to the Ashram.

A little earlier, Professor Karve had a scheme prepared for the purpose of giving encouragement to girls to remain unmarried until they reached the age of twenty. He was able to have the co-operation and support of a generous friend. The kind-hearted gentleman promised to send a monthly contribution of twenty-five rupees and continued to send it for more than seven years. This scheme became known as the Brahmacharya Fund. The monthly subsidy of twenty-five rupees enabled Professor Karve to help three women students in the Ashram. The first three students of the Vidyalaya were the 'Brahmacharya' scholars. As the donor had not laid down a condition that the Brahmacharya Fund scholars must be inmates of the Ashram, and as he had offered his help to Professor Karve himself and not to the Management of the Ashram, it was diverted to the new venture, the Mahila Vidyalaya, and the three scholars were transferred to it. The Other three were daughters of two of Professor Karve's friends who were convinced that whatever he did was right.

Among those who came forward to do the work of teaching in the Vidyalaya was Mr. V. L. Soman, Professor Karve's old teacher. Radhabai's sister, Narmadabai, once again offered her services to the Vidyalaya and she took up the management of the kitchen and other household work.

In the first annual report it was stated that the Mahila Vidyalaya was a bold venture, but the founder expressed his faith in the support of his friends and in his own efforts which he believed would enable him to meet difficulties.

No venture conceived and undertaken with a selfless motive fails to attract the sympathy of kind-hearted people. A

lady from Bombay heard of the new institution. She knew it was in need of help. She made a collection of foodgrains. This collection was known as the Mushti Fund. Going from door to door, the lady collected a good quantity of rice. She sent to Professor Karve the money she got by selling the rice, supplementing the amount with a few silent donations in cash. The amount Professor Karve received from the lady was seven rupees and four annas. He accepted it with gratitude. The actual addition it made to the resources of the Vidyalaya was small and limited, but the delight and inspiration which the lady's earnestness gave him were unlimited.

Good causes, like good men, have the capacity to draw towards them—as the magnet draws iron, both bright and rusty—criticism and condemnation as well as praise and applause.

Not a few persons understood and appreciated Professor Karve's new project. They looked upon it as a much-needed measure to discourage early marriages and to encourage girls to spend their time usefully before getting married at a mature age. They did not think that the Mahila Vidyalaya was entering the field of the education of girls for unhealthy competition. In their opinion, more institutions like the Girls' High School at Huzarpaga were needed and that the Mahila Vidyalaya was by no means a rival institution.

There were others who looked at the Mahila Vidyalaya with a different eye. A friend who was not altogether unsympathetic wrote to Professor Karve :

“When there is already in Poona a high school for girls with boarding arrangements added, there is no necessity of starting another Home for unmarried girls in the same town. It would be a competition to the Girls' High School.”

It was neither necessary nor useful to argue with those who held this point of view. After some time, not only the gentleman's views were changed but he even came forward to give financial help to the Mahila Vidyalaya.

A gentleman had a decent income and had six daughters and no son. It was not difficult for him to meet the expenses of his large family. But how was he to find the money to get all his six daughters married? When he heard about the Mahila Vidyalaya of Professor Karve, he had an idea. If he had six sons, he would have given them education, and he would not have had to bother about getting them married. Why should he not give his daughters the same opportunity to get the benefits of education? They could be as self-reliant as young men. He therefore decided to treat his daughters like sons and not to worry about their marriage. He made a beginning by sending his eldest daughter with her aunt, who was a widow, to the Balikashram. The following year another daughter was sent, and two more came after eighteen months. An aunt and eight nieces—not six, as two more were born later—came and received the benefits of education the Vidyalaya was able to give. These benefits were so precious and so helpful in their later lives that it was no longer necessary for anyone of them to think of marriage as the only goal of a woman's aspirations.

It was not always necessary for Professor Karve to go out with the begging-bowl. Well-wishers, friends and admirers came forward in large numbers to support his cause. Every time he received a message of appreciation or a contribution in cash, his heart's gratitude went out to the kind-hearted person.

Just a month after the Vidyalaya was started, a friend, Major Krishnaji Vishnu Kukde, collected four hundred rupees

for the Vidyalaya, and a few months later sent two hundred more.

About the same time, he had a letter from a widow. Mrs. Gangabai Gokhale wrote:

"In the *Dnyan Prakash*, I read an account of your Mahila Vidyalaya. I had also an eye-witness's account from my nephew who has seen your new institution and its work. I deem it my duty to help a cause like this. The Brahmacharya ashram which you are conducting is striving to remove the cause of the misfortune which befell me—early widowhood. It is a praiseworthy effort. It is, therefore, my wish to give a monthly scholarship of five rupees in the name of my beloved husband to one of the girls in your Vidyalaya. I would like the scholarship to be named, 'Vishwanath Sadashiv Gokhale Scholarship'. I shall before long make a permanent endowment and, till then, shall send you sixty rupees annually in advance."

From Dr. T. C. Khandwala of Bombay came a monthly contribution of ten rupees for the Brahmacharya Fund.

When the scheme of a building was undertaken in 1911, the N. M. Wadia Charities offered to donate a third of the total estimated expenditure of twenty-five thousand rupees.

In the resolution which the trustees of the N. M. Wadia Charities passed, the name of the institution was stated as the "Mahila Vidyalaya, Poona, (Girl-Widow School)". The cheque was already received and it could have been credited to the funds of the Mahila Vidyalaya, but Professor Karve would not allow any uncertainty to remain. He would return the cheque if the donation was offered for the Ashram, and ask the trustees to cancel it and send another one for the Ashram. He therefore met Mr. H. A. Wadia, one of the trustees, at his house in Kirkee and had the matter clarified. Mr. Wadia told him that the words "Girl-Widow School" were added by

mistake. The cheque was cashed two months after it was received.

The Servants of India Society was founded in 1905 by Professor Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Professor Karve's contemporary at the Elphinstone College and, later, his colleague in the Fergusson College. A group of workers, following the example and adopting the ideals of Professor Gokhale himself, dedicated their lives for the service of India. Professor Gokhale was among the first who offered their congratulations to Professor Karve on his undertaking the new venture of the Vidyalaya. When Professor Karve lost a large sum of money in a bank crash, he remembered Professor Gokhale and the interest he had shown in his new venture and went to him for help and advice. Professor Gokhale readily handed over to him as a loan, a sum of five thousand rupees which he could spare from the balance to the credit of the Servants of India Society.

It was not always easy for Professor Karve to express adequately what he felt towards his friends and patrons. Whenever he thought of them, as he did particularly when he wrote the annual report of the Mahila Vidyalaya for 1912, he remembered the difficult times he had to pass through and the relief their spontaneous help had given him on many occasions.

In December 1911, the Mahila Vidyalaya which, till then, functioned only as a hostel, was transformed into a full-fledged residential school with a building of its own at Hingne next to the building of the Anath Balikashram. Thus was the second dream of Dhondo Keshav Karve realised.

By his words, and more by his deeds, Dhondo Keshav Karve was exerting an influence on the minds of those who worked with him. Among these there was none who felt the influence more keenly than his sister-in-law, Parvatibai

Athavale. Yet, she had a will and a judgment of her own and independently exercised them in most of the things she did. Anna had been instrumental in giving a new shape to her life and, had it not been for his advice and persuasion, she would have spent her life in a remote place like Deorukh in her father's house. She felt grateful to him for giving her an honourable place in life and in his institution. She was even more grateful to him for the opportunities her son, Nana, was having in getting good education and a career suitable for his high intellectual abilities. Yet. She would not accept Anna's opinions in every respect. If they did not conform to her will and judgment, she did not hesitate to express her disapproval.

When in the early years of the Balikashram, one of the widows took the bold step of having her hair grown, Parvatibai was furious. In those days she regarded it as a sinful act, as she then looked upon the custom as a sacred injunction prescribed by religion. Besides, she felt that the step which the girl had taken would have an undesirable effect on public opinion which would undoubtedly be harmful to the Ashram. She fought tooth and nail against the introduction of this reform in the Ashram for nearly ten years as she was anxious to see that no harm was done to the Ashram, and its growth was in no way hampered.

Gradually, however, her views changed. As she gave more and more thought to the subject, it became clear to her that it was not proper to force a widow to have her hair removed. She continued, however, to regard the practice itself as a holy one and was opposed to any effort to prevent a widow from adopting the mendicant's garb if she was desirous of adopting it.

About the change that was gradually coming over her way of thinking and over her outlook, Parvatibai wrote in the story of her life:

“My life in Poona was like a re-birth. A child is born without any knowledge of the world but each new day in its life enlarges the sphere of its knowledge and experience. The education I had gave me a new birth. Everything that came to me was new and I imbibed it. There was a widening of my field of knowledge and my old ideas began to recede into non-existence, yielding place to new and liberal ones. I did not, however, allow myself to be carried away entirely by the wave of reform. There were certain old beliefs and ways of living which I could never give up, because I did not regard everything that was old as useless and meaningless. Even today, I regard many old beliefs and traditions as the best ones.

“Ever since I came to Poona, I have Anna’s example constantly before my eyes. It has enabled me to steer clear of certain fantastic ideas of individual freedom and equality.”

There was another and a personal factor which compelled Parvatibai to stick to the old custom of the shaven head. She knew very well that there would be a wild sensation if she ever took the step of giving up those outward marks of widowhood. She was not prepared to face public criticism and condemnation. She did not worry about herself but it was for the sake of her son, who was still in his teens. She would avoid everything that was likely to give him the impression that his mother was guilty of transgressing that was ordained by religion. As years rolled on, she began to feel assured that any act of reform on her part would not adversely affect the reputation of the Ashram on account of the changing times. But she waited till Nana was old enough to think for himself and understand things.

In those days, Professor Karve’s progressive and liberal outlook was unconsciously having its influence on the dynamic mind of his sister-in-law.

In 1912, Parvatibai took the decision when Nana was twenty-four years old.

“Anna. I have decided to have my hair grown again.” Parvatibai told Professor Karve: “but I would do it only if I have your approval.”

“I am so glad to hear about your decision,” Anna replied. “You have my hearty approval.”

“There is one point which I must take into consideration before I decide.” As Parvatibai spoke, her voice became grave. “If there is the least possibility of my action having an adverse effect on the Ashram, I shall refrain from taking the step so long as I am associated with its work.”

Parvatibai’s fears were not altogether groundless. Anna knew it. But he saw deeper into things than most others. There would be a storm but it would not last long and would not seriously affect the reputation of the Ashram or its working. He advised Parvatibai to take the step she had decided upon.

At forty, she discarded the garb of the mendicant widow. “Why has Parvatibai begun to grow her hair now?” People began to ask one another.

“She has been doing the work of the Ashram all these years and her outward appearance was hardly a handicap. Surely it couldn’t be for the sake of the Ashram that she has now thought of a change,” someone remarked.

“Oh no! Surely there is some other motive,” was the reply.

Those who thought they were more bold went to Professor Karve and asked him :

“Mr. Karve, why has Parvatibai started wearing her hair again? Has she any personal motive?”

“Not that I know of,” Professor Karve calmly replied, “but if she has any, you will know it.”

## A Vision and a Dream

Is it only the head which wears the crown that lies uneasy? Professor Karve wore no crown on his head. If he had any, it was a crown of thorns, but it was not thorns that made his head uneasy.

The Ashram and the Vidyalaya were doing good work, but there was restlessness in the mind of the founder. It was yearning for something more, something better and wider.

In giving stability to these institutions, he had to work hard and collect funds, but he knew financial help was not enough. For many years, it had become his conviction that for the progress and prosperity of a good cause, the most essential factor was man-power. Paid workers could be found in plenty, and if a person was paid well, he could even be expected to do the work efficiently. Efficiency was certainly an important factor but greater than efficiency was devotion. Gokhale had founded the Servants of India Society on the basis of sacrifice and devotion. The Deccan Education Society of which Karve himself was a life-worker, was another organisation which owed its foundation and its steady growth to the selfless zeal of its founders and life workers. Before he came to Poona, Professor Karve was for several years connected with the Cathedral Girls' High School, and he knew that it was conducted by persons whose paramount object was to serve. He had great admiration not only for the workers of these institutions but also for the ideals and the principles on

which they were founded. He pondered on what he had seen. It became clear to him that the devotion of the workers who toiled for the progress of those institutions was not different from the devotion with which a devotee worships his God.

One of the striking features of the building-up of a new India during the nineteenth century was the work of the Christian missionaries. Professor Karve had great respect for them and their work. Although their primary object was the spread of Christianity, the work they had done in the spheres of education and medical relief had, according to him, been a shining example to Indians.

For the spread of education which was one of the most important nation-building activities, hundreds of workers were needed. Such workers should regard, Professor Karve felt, service of fellowmen as service of God. The idea that the service of one's fellowmen was what God liked most was, he thought, foreign to Indians. Unless men and women working in the field of education were inspired by this consciousness and unless they took up the work in a worshipful spirit, no abiding progress was possible. These thoughts made Professor Karve's head uneasy and his heart restless.

They were not new or of recent occurrence. In the Memorandum of Association of the Hindu Widows' Home Association which was registered on September 18, 1898, the following was included as one of the objects of the Anath Balikashram :

“To create and maintain a class of Hindu Sisters of Charity and Mercy.”

The idea dearest to Professor Karve's mind was the formation of a body of workers whose mission in life was selfless service. He had given expression to this idea in a statement which he had prepared and circulated in 1902 :

“Although the Ashram has been founded with the object of enabling widows to have education and to acquire a good moral foundation for their lives and character, that is not the only object. The purpose with which the Ashram was founded and is being conducted will be fulfilled only if it is able to send out into the world workers who would take up the cause of social service without any expectation of material benefit.”

It became his wish to spiritualize social work as Gokhale was trying to spiritualize political work.

His mind was particularly fascinated by the word ‘mission’ and all that it suggested and meant. He searched for a similar word in Sanskrit or Marathi. The word *math* came to him after some mental effort. It contained the idea of an institution or of an order founded for service—the idea which was to be found in the word ‘mission’.

The essence of the teaching of the *Bhagavadgeeta* was ‘Nishkam Karma’ (work without the desire of fruit). No service would be true service if it was rendered with the expectation of some return or of profit. Therefore, a *math* must have as its underlying principle—the rock on which it was to be founded—the idea of ‘Nishkam Karma’—selfless work. After ten years of ceaseless mental effort, Professor Karve took the decision and found an order of disinterested workers to be named the Nishkam Karma Math.

A few months after he had completed fifty years of his life, on November 4, 1908, Professor Karve and two others met in Bombay in the Seva Sadan to take the vows of the Nishkam Karma Math. The vow they took was:

“I renounce all claim and right to what I have called my own.”

“I will from this moment belong to the Math.”

“I will willingly accept whatever provision the Math will hereafter make for me and for my family.”

The two persons who joined Professor Karve were Mr. N. M. Athavale, who was a college student and Mrs. Mathurabai Uchgaonkar, who was a widow and also was a student at the time. The name given to the order at the time was 'The Indian Ladies' Mission'.

Although the foundation of the Nishkam Karma Math was laid on that day, actual work was not started. All that Professor Karve did for some time was to keep the light he had kindled burning with his own faith.

He selected a few widows who were inmates of the Ashram and talked to them about the Nishkam Karma Math, its ideals and the programme of activities and the method of working which he had in view. They met in the quiet hours of the evening on the top of a neighbouring hill. As Anna spoke and expounded the ideals of the Math, the girls felt inspired. They did not understand much of what he said but they were filled with inspiration. The Math was started by Anna. He was asking them to join it. That was enough for them. They heard the call and resolved to dedicate their lives as workers of the Nishkam Karma Math.

The group now consisted of four men and fourteen women. It included Mr. Balaji Vinayak Kowlagekar and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Mahadev Keshav Gadgil.

On December 6, 1910, the first meeting of the workers of the Math was held. Mr. and Mrs. Kowlagkar and Mr. and Mrs. Gadgil were enrolled as the first four workers.

Mr. N. M. Athavale, Parvatibai's son, who joined them soon was one of the two who had taken the Math's vow with Professor Karve in 1908. He had come to Poona for his education when he was eight years old. Since then he had been under Anna's kindly and watchful eye. From an early age, Nana Athavale had imbibed the ideals of service which

he saw translated into Anna's life and activities. When he took the vow, he did not have before his eyes the whole picture of the Math's ideals and its programme but he knew that the idea was good.

Mrs. Deodhar and Mrs. Namjoshi, two of the three ladies who had joined the Widows' Home soon after it was founded by Professor Karve, did not approve of the new activity. They had opposed the proposal of the Mahila Vidyalaya when it was first taken up. Now they felt that Professor Karve was doing a disservice to the Widows' Home by inducing some of its inmates to join the Math. Their resentment and opposition increased as the Math began to function.

Professor Karve wanted to have only women workers or *sevikas* for the Math. But it was not possible to enlist women immediately as workers. Mr. Gadgil and Mr. Kowlagekar were working as teachers in the Widows' Home at the time. It was for this reason that it was decided to admit them as workers.

The immediate objective before the members of the Math was to train workers for the Widows' Home and the Mahila Vidyalaya. Mr. Athavale, and eight of the workers who were women were still studying and they were expected to dedicate their services to the Math as soon as they completed their studies.

Ever since he gave concrete shape to his dream of the Math, Professor Karve strove hard to impress on the minds of those who willingly came forward to join it that the membership of the Math was a great and sacred responsibility. Unless they were prepared to live a life of austerity and simplicity, it would not be possible for them to render real service to the Math and, through it, to society. He prepared the constitution of the Math with great care and foresight.

One feature of the life of austerity and simplicity which was prescribed for the Math worker was that he should be

content with the food he got by *begging*—*bhiksha*, as the measure was called. Two women volunteers came forward to collect rice and other foodstuffs by begging, which they did once a week. Mrs. Gopikabai Lele and Mrs. Radhabai Malwankar did the work with devotion and they were joined by Anandibai Karve.

The Nishkam Karma Math was, indeed, a lofty ideal it was not, as some of Professor Karve's critics said, an impracticable one. Professor Gokhale did not find it difficult to enlist the active co-operation and life-long services of devoted workers for his Servants of India Society. The Christian Missions found hundreds of workers to conduct their manifold activities. But the Nishkam Karma Math of Professor Karve did not go much beyond the preliminary spade-work. The constitution was drafted and the founder-members were eagerly waiting for volunteers of the right type to come and join the Math. For a fairly long time they had to remain satisfied with keeping up their own enthusiasm. Perhaps Professor Karve was not able to chalk out a regular programme of activities for the Math. It is true that the workers of the Math were expected to take up the work of the Ashram and the Vidyalaya. If, as it was stated, the Math was expected to train workers for the Ashram, what programme of training did it have? Professor Karve felt diffident about his own capacity as far as the work of the Math was concerned. Before the Math was able to produce any tangible results, its promoters had to face a violent storm of criticism and ultimately forced to merge the Math into the Ashram itself.

Most people found it difficult to appreciate the aim which Professor Karve had in view in founding the Nishkam Karma Math. Even those who were actually connected with the working of the Ashram expressed their grave doubts regarding

the usefulness of the Math, and Professor Karve found them among his bitterest opponents. The *Indu Prakash* of Bombay published a number of articles on the subject in August 1913 and presented in minute detail the views of those who could not find any praiseworthy elements in the constitution of the Math.

The first article was written by a trusted and esteemed friend on whose information and judgment the editor of the *Indu Prakash* could place implicit reliance and whose disinterested friendship for the cause the editor could confidently vouchsafe. Adopting the title “A knotty problem” for the article, the writer stated:

“In part common and analogous, but in part conflicting and divergent as the objects of these three institutions (the Ashram, the Vidyalaya and the Math) are—those of the Math in particular being of a very debatable character—their working under the common direction and supervision of Professor Karve, and in close proximity with each other, has produced difficulties and complications of a serious character.”

It was feared that the Widows’ Home no longer had the single-minded zealous devotion of its founder as the new institutions, the Vidyalaya and the Math, were engaging most of his attention and energies.

On February 4, 1913, the Anath Balikashram suffered a grievous loss on account of the resignation of Kashibai Deodhar who had served it as Lady Superintendent for many years with great ability and distinction. Mrs. Deodhar was one of the first three women workers of the Ashram. It was stated that certain differences with the Management had made it necessary for her to sever her connection with the Ashram. Commenting on this subject, the writer of the article in the *Indu Prakash* said:

“Till recently there were three such Lady Life-Members of the Home, two of whom being also bracketed with Professor Karve as co-Secretaries. Out of this dishearteningly small number of three Life-Members, one, Mrs. Kashibai Deodhar, who was doing duty as co-Secretary and Lady Superintendent of the Home has, to a large extent on account of the new developments, recently left the institution for good.”

The new developments were evidently those which arose as a result of the foundation of the two new institutions.

It was painful for the writer to have to say that the work of the Ashram suffered “under the present grievous circumstances” and because, as he went on to remark, “Professor Karve’s energies and affections are now almost entirely absorbed by the Mahila Vidyalaya and the Nishkam Karma Math.” Since 1910, he devoted much of his time and energy to the task of securing financial help for the Vidyalaya and the Math and finding work and members for the latter.

The writer went on to point out the following features of the constitution and working of the Math which he described as objectionable:

- (1) It was housed in a building which was constructed for the Vidyalaya.
- (2) The Math was managing all the affairs of the Vidyalaya.
- (3) The Vidyalaya was under the absolute and complete control of the Math and even the subscribers had apparently no legal right to interfere with its affairs.
- (4) Professor Karve was the sole and absolute dictator of the Math for the first five years.
- (5) The Vidyalaya which is controlled by the Math and the Ashram are conducted as two separate institutions in two separate buildings and with two

separate establishments under separate managements, although according to the annual reports for 1912, there were only forty-eight girls in the Vidyalaya and only a hundred and five girls in the Widows' Home (Ashram) School.

The most serious objection which the writer raised was against the basic ideals formulated and adopted for the Math. He asked:

"Is it morally right to allow inexperienced boys and girls of the tender age of eighteen to bind themselves, for life by the kind of pledges of poverty and self-abnegation which the Math exacts ?"

Quoting the instances of undesirable results which were noticed in, the working of similar institutions in the West and also in India, the writer uttered a grave warning.

"Platonic arrangements are not for this world and the evil results of the occasional scandals to which they give rise are so great that wise men will guard against the temptations and opportunities for abuse which Maths and Convents of this character afford so plentifully."

The writer struck a note of sympathy when he remarked:

"Things may perhaps go on well so long as, Professor Karve is there to watch closely and exercise effective control. But it cannot be said that there are great dangers of abuse and corruption as well as of backsliding and hypocrisy and these, if and when they occur, will seriously injure not only the Math but the whole cause of social reform. The risks are great and the stakes heavy while the guarantees are few and feeble."

Nine persons were included in the list of the *sevaks* and *sevikas* of the Math in 1912. Four of them were widows between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five. It was also

reported that five or six girls had taken pledges and were under training as probationers.

There was no suggestion that the Math should be disbanded. It was only suggested that those who were recruited as *sevaks* or *sevikas* of the Math should be persons above the age of thirty. It was also recommended that so long as any *sevaks* or *sevikas* of the Math were serving in the Home or the Vidyalaya, no inmate from the Home or the Vidyalaya or no one working on the staff of either of these institutions should be admitted as a *sevak* or *sevika* of the Math until two years had elapsed after the person's connection with the institution ceased.

With a heart that was near to breaking, Professor Karve read and listened to all that was being written and spoken against his new experiment. The ideal was lofty and pure above reproach. It was so high that only one in a million could have conceived it. With a vision that was lonely, the man who saw it proceeded to give it a name and a shape. Not even his bitterest adversary could accuse him of having a selfish motive, and there was no malice in the criticisms that appeared in the Press or arose out of the discussions which were taking place. As the "trusted and esteemed friend" writing in the columns of the *Indu Prakash* said, his article embodied "the views of a number of tried friends of the cause whom the writer took special care to consult".

It was impossible that with his sweet reasonableness and readiness to rectify his own errors, Professor Karve would ignore the sympathetic notes of caution which fell on his ears from various quarters. It was becoming increasingly apparent to him that his purpose in founding the Math had failed to catch the imagination or win the appreciation of many of his own friends and well-wishers. Those who had come forward

to take the vows of the Math did so not because they fully understood and appreciated its ideals but because it was their revered Anna who had started the Math. Nana Athavale, Varubai Shevade, Seetabai Annigeri, Seetabai Joshi, Gangubai Tambole, Banubai Aho—all of them had joined the Math when they were students. They never regretted the step in their later lives. All these names are now to be seen among the life-workers of the Widows' Home Association which came into being after the merger of the three institutions—the Home, the Vidyalaya and the Math.

There was pathetic evidence of the effect of what was going on in Professor Karve's mind in the following words which formed the last paragraph of the first annual report of the Math which was submitted in July 1912 :

"Humbly has the foundation of the Math been laid. It lies in the womb of the future as to whether a beautiful building will rise on this foundation in fullness of time or one stone followed by another will tumble to the ground. Sacrifice of wealth alone is not enough for the unhampered growth of such projects. What is more essential is sacrifice of such passion as pride and intolerance which are the real enemies. Instances are not wanting of institutions which have been destroyed by these passions."

With a humility that was the mainstay of his character, Professor Karve began to think of the best way of pulling the cause he loved so dearly out of the mire of criticism and misunderstanding. He returned to his idea of bringing about a merger of the Ashram and the Vidyalaya with the Math yielding its ideals to the merger as the fountain spring of its inspiration.

The plan was placed before the Management of the Ashram which had already become a Society, and it was

readily accepted after the necessary modifications were made in the constitution of the Ashram. These modifications were made for the purpose of making room for the objects and functions of the Vidyalaya and the Math.

Professor Karve welcomed this event as a happy culmination of all the trials and tribulations which he and his colleagues had to suffer. It was to him like gold that had to pass through fire before it could shine with its pure lustre. A *maharshi* that he was and became known in later years, he considered it most apt to name the event “Triveni Sangam”, by which name is known to countless pilgrims the confluence of the three holy rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati at Prayag (Allahabad).

In 1912, the founder of the Nishkam Karma Math was overwhelmed by the criticism levelled against the idea, the foundation and the objects of the Math. His mind was filled with intense pain to see that his ideas and efforts were not rightly understood and appreciated. He was also often disturbed by other anxious thoughts. Still, he went on with his work and daily routine. He continued to give whatever help others expected from him. He was at the time giving lessons from an English primer to a forty-two-year-old student. The student was Parvatibai Athavale. Parvatibai had been going on collection tours regularly every year, or even twice a year, since 1904. While doing this work, she found her ignorance of English a great handicap. Very often she used to get down at a wrong railway station because she could not read the name written on the board in English. She met people who could not understand Marathi and it was not possible for her to explain to them the purpose of her visit. Once or twice before, she had started taking lessons in English, but had to give up the effort for want of time. Now she felt convinced that a working knowledge of English would be a great asset. Whose help could she seek? There was none among the

teachers or workers of the Ashram who would be willing to spare time for her. But she knew that even in the midst of all his activities and worries, Anna would spare as much time for her as she would like to have. Whenever she went to him, he set aside the work in hand and explained to her new words, phrases and constructions in English. One such occasion was the Diwali Eve (*Dhan Trayodashi*) in 1914. Professor Karve was busy writing the chapter dealing with the days of his boyhood at Murud for his autobiography. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Parvatibai came and stood near him.

"Have you some time to spare for my lesson ?" she asked book."

"Sure!" Anna replied. "Do sit down and open your book."

He set aside the sheets on which he was writing and was soon absorbed in teaching his student.

At this very time, he was also applying his mind to the task of setting the accounts of the Students' Fund of the New English School Association which he had himself started about fifteen years before. Since the Anath Balikashram was founded in 1896, Professor Karve felt guilty of not having done adequate justice to what he owed as a life member to the Deccan Education Society. Though the members of the Society and its Management found his work thoroughly satisfactory, he was not satisfied with the work he had been able to do in the Fergusson College or in the New English School. He felt keenly and earnestly that he should do something more than teaching his subjects efficiently. He was also deeply conscious of the fact that it was the status he had acquired as a member and worker of the Deccan Education Society that had given him success in the activities undertaken by him. He felt he would be guilty of ingratitude if he did not do something, however little, to help and further the cause of the Deccan Education Society.

Out of his anxious thoughts the way was found. At meeting of the old students of the New English School which he convened, the New English School Association was founded. It was suggested that old students of the School should be asked to join the Association as members and should be requested to contribute a month's income every year to a fund which was started under the auspices of the Association. Professor Karve had an ambitious plan of work and procedure for the Fund. It was decided that the Association should collect a lakh of rupees and hand over the amount to the News English School. The work was well begun under Professor Karve's guidance but it was not possible for him to organise and carry it out according to his plan and wishes. At the end of 1905, the total amount collected was Rs. 1484.77. With his own conscience acting as a judge to investigate his failings and omissions, he now resolved to do what he could without seeking co-operation or contributions from anyone else. From July I. 1906, he began to add ten rupees to the Fund from his income every month. Before the boys in the Matriculation class passed out of the School, he assembled them together and addressed them. While he was on leave for two years from November 1910, he worked in the Ashram, and for the work he did, he received a small salary. He contributed the salary he received from the Deccan Education Society during this period to this Fund. This he did for eight months.

In April 1912, he completed the period of twenty years as a life-member of the Deccan Education Society. Now he was entitled to retire with a pension. He thought of handing over the Fund to the Society before retiring but he was asked to continue for two years more as Professor of Mathematics in the College. When, at the end of 1914, he retired, the total amount collected for the Fund was a little over three thousand rupees. This amount was handed over by him with all the papers to the Secretary of the Society on the day on which he

bade good-bye to the Fergusson College and the Deccan Education Society.

Even before the professor took his tearful leave of the College he had served so faithfully for more than twenty years, the householder had relieved himself of the responsibilities and anxieties of his family. On that fateful day in 1908 on which he took the solemn vow of the Nishkam Karma Math, and from that day, he transferred all his earnings to the Math and took from the Math not a pie more than what was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his family. From that day, he ceased to have any balance or savings with him. In actual practice, however, he had to take back from the Math whatever he had surrendered, but there was this difference that the possessive or hoarding instinct was given up and the mind became free from all cares.

Yes, the man had become free from the cares of the family but the wife could not afford to forget them or set them aside. Baya had by now made her shoulders broad and strong enough to carry the burden of her family of a husband and three sons.

“Mr. Karve never earned much,” Baya wrote in her reminiscences, “and he would prefer to spend whatever he earned for others and for the institutions he had founded rather than on the members of his family. This tendency of his made my task at home extremely difficult. I mustered up courage and made a resolve never to leave anything undone to give my sons a good bringing-up. I did all the household work without the assistance of a servant. The training I had as a midwife enabled me to earn a little. Mr. Karve once brought a girl to our house as a boarder. She belonged to a rich family. Mr. Karve was one of the three gentlemen who were appointed trustees of her property during her years of minority. As the other two declined the trusteeship, Mr. Karve became the sole trustee. I was glad to have the girl in my house and under my

care mainly because Mr. Karve was to receive a trusteeship fee of four hundred rupees per year. For twelve or thirteen years the girl stayed with me. She was sickly and I nursed her with the tenderness of a mother. I was glad to have the amount of the annual trusteeship fee to meet the expenses over the education of my sons."

The ideal which Professor Karve now set before his eyes was that of a *vanaprastha* who, according to ancient Hindu tradition, was a person who had renounced all pleasures and cares of a *grihastha* or householder after a certain age. It was not at all difficult for him to assume the role of the *vanaprastha*, for his life as a *grihastha* was more like a *vanaprastha* than a *grihastha*. A striking feature of that life was a mind free from attachments and the employment of all energies for doing good to others.

In order to be a real *vanaprastha*, he decided to release himself from entanglements and obligations of all kinds. Henceforward, he would leave for his sons nothing more than what was just required for their education. It was no longer necessary for him to worry about the eldest of them, Raghunath. It had pleased the father well to see that he passed the Matriculation Examination with the first rank, thus making full use of the coaching his father gave him in mathematics, history and geography. The same high standard of achievement was maintained at the college and the University examinations. Shankar did almost equally well at the Matriculation Examination. His father would have liked him to continue his studies at the Fergusson College after passing the Previous Examination, but he chose to take up the medical career. Dinkar joined the Fergusson College and Bhaskar was doing; well at the New English School.

There were obligations and entanglements of other kinds. Looking back on the years that had gone by, he tried to

recollect the occasions on which he was unpleasant or impudent to anyone. There was one such occasion which caused him the pain of self-torture many a time after the incident had happened and was forgotten by others. In 1907, the Managing Committee of the Ashram had met to consider his scheme of the Mahila Vidyalaya. The scheme was rejected and Professor Karve had reason to feel disheartened. The meeting was over but the members of the Committee were still discussing the matter among themselves. At this time, he allowed his temper to get the better of his usual calmness and restraint of speech. He uttered words which he later felt were insulting, while speaking to Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, Chairman of the Committee. Nearly five years later, as the painful memory of the incident once again came back to him, he felt an impulse to make amends. He was at Hyderabad (Sind) at the time. From there he wrote to Dr. Bhandarkar:

15th December, 1911

Revered Sir,

I am exceedingly sorry for my insulting words and attitude at the meeting of the Committee of the Widows' Home, five years ago, when the question of admitting non-widows in the Ashram was finally decided. I was excited at the time and my conduct was disgraceful. For a long time I did not feel so and afterwards when I felt it I had not the courage to ask for forgiveness. However, better late than never. So I now make an unreserved apology for my conduct of that night and I request you to be kind to me and pardon me.

I shall circulate a copy of this letter among the members of the Committee who were present that night when I return to Poona in the second week of January.

Yours obediently.

D. K. Karve

Dr. Bhandarkar wrote the following reply:

Sangam, Poona.

23rd December, 1911

Dear Mr. Karve,

I never thought much of the incident you mention which consisted simply in your saying that you did not want any committee for your new institution. I did not take it as an insult at all, but simply understood that our assistance was in no way required by you.

Yours sincerely.

R. G. Bhandarkar

On August 28, 1913, a meeting was held at the John Small Memorial Hall in Poona. The speaker was Professor D. K. Karve and the subject of the paper which he read at the meeting was "Twenty Years in the Cause of Indian Women." After the paper was read, printed copies were distributed. It enabled Professor Karve's critics as well as friends' to have a more intimate knowledge and a better appreciation of the strenuous efforts he had made for improving the lot of Indian women and raising their status. Mr. K. R. Mitra, the editor of the popular Marathi Monthly, *Masik Manoranjan*, read Professor Karve's talk and felt inspired. He first requested him to re-write the same in Marathi for his magazine. When Mr. Mitra had a favourable response, he wrote to Professor Karve again, asking him this time to write his reminiscences which he undertook to print and publish. Mr. Mitra had published a Marathi translation of Booker T. Washington's autobiography, and had distributed copies of the book among the subscribers of the *Manoranjan* as an annual gift. He was desirous of giving his subscribers copies of Professor Karve's autobiography as a gift the following year.

One of Professor Karve's weakest points had been his modesty. His immediate reaction to Mr. Mitra's request was to thank him and humbly say 'no'. After some time, however, he tried and succeeded in conquering his own diffidence. He felt that if the proposed autobiography had the same favourable reception from the public which his paper on "Twenty Years in the Cause of Indian Women" had, it would serve a useful purpose. It would give publicity to the work of the Ashram, the Vidyalaya and the Math. His *Atma-Vritta* (autobiography) was made available to the readers of *Masik Manoranjan* and to a much wider circle of admirers of Professor Karve during the Diwali of 1915. In offering the book to the subscribers and readers of his magazine, the editor described the author as "the man who had dedicated his all for the progress of Indian women and brought glory to Maharashtra by founding and conducting with eminent success the three institutions, Anath Balikashram, Mahila Vidyalaya, and Nish Kam Karma Math."

Two months after the *Atma-Vritta* was published, Professor Karve went to Bombay to preside over the annual session of the National Social Conference which was held there during Christmas.

Forty years earlier, a boy had stood trembling before the Chairman of the Public Examination Committee at Satara. The Chairman had refused to admit him for the Examination because he looked too small. The same boy, fifty seven years old now, was to appear before an assembly of all-India leaders as a pioneer of reform and to guide its deliberations.

He was an aging man now and a man who was able to look back upon a life of many vicissitudes—trials and successes—with gratitude but there was no pride in his feelings. Although he had done enough for a man nearing the age of sixty to regard his life with satisfaction, he did not allow himself to look upon the approaching completion of sixty years as journey's end.

## SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTE XII

- “1. The objects of the Math are :
  - (a) To create and institute a band of women workers willing to serve zealously the cause of social good.
  - (b) To admit men workers and commence and continue the work of the Math till a competent staff of women workers is secured and after that to stop the admission of men workers, leaving it to the option of the existing men workers either to resign or continue to work to the end of their lives.
  - (c) To conduct boarding-schools and day-schools for women and to undertake educational and benevolent charitable work of a general character.
  - (d) To give help to institutions engaged in work of the above-mentioned character by means of men and money according to the means of the Math.
2. Every member of the Math must make a solemn affirmation that :
  - (a) From this day forward I shall devote my life to the work of the Math.
  - (b) I shall use my capabilities to their fullest extent and while engaged in the work connected with the institution, I shall never wish for private gains.
  - (c) I shall ungrudgingly submit to the decisions consistent with the rules of the institution.
  - (d) I shall cheerfully remain satisfied with the arrangements made by the majority of votes

regarding my maintenance and of those dependent on me.

- (e) I shall keep my private life pure.
- (f) My living and dress will be plain and simple.
- (g) I shall be generous in the matter of the religious belief of others and I shall do nothing to shock their susceptibilities.
- (h) I shall hate no one.”

*(Looking Back, Pages 89-90)*

Even before the Math was founded, Professor Karve had started collecting funds for it in his own peculiar way. He wrote in his *Looking Back* :

“ .... In those days postmasters used to get a commission of one pice on the sale of a rupee worth of postage stamps. There was also a commission of one anna in the rupee on the sale of receipt stamps and these could be obtained from any post office. We had a post office at the Widows' Home and the post-mistress there promised to give me all the commission due to her toward the cause of the Mission that was to be founded. I induced the Manager of the Weekly *Dnyanprakash* to buy stamps from me and I promised to send them regularly to his office. I allowed half a pice to him and the other half pice was the share of the Math. A clerk in an office also bought receipt stamps required in his office every month from me. By the time the Math was founded, the collection from this source came to Rs. 65 and that was the first item on the credit side of the Math. The activity had to be discontinued some time before the Math was started, as these commissions were stopped by Government .... ”

*(Looking Back, page 88)*

From the *Atma-Vritta* (Autobiography) : The Editorial note which appeared in the *Indu Prakash*.

*The Hindu Widows' Home at Poona*

"Elsewhere we publish under the heading of 'A Knotty Problem' an article from a gentleman, on whose information and judgment we can place implicit reliance and whose disinterested friendship for the cause we can confidently vouchsafe, on the rather delicate but for the matter of that highly important subject of the plight to which the Anath Balikashram or the Hindu Widows' Home at Poona has come owing to the starting of two new institutions in its neighbourhood. That indefatigable and unquestionably sincere worker, Professor Karve, who founded the Home, is also the founder of its two new associates—the Mahila Vidyalaya and the Nishkam Karma Math. We believe we will not be wrong if we lay it down categorically that the general public understand that all these three institutions are working smoothly and harmoniously and with a substantial agreement as to the aims and objects and the methods and principles of work. Doubtless, most patrons send their subscriptions with implicit trust in Professor Karve's disposal of the fund and allotments as between the three institutions. The facts disclosed in the article we publish by our 'trusted and esteemed friend' and the story they make up of rivalries, differences and wanton waste of resources will therefore come almost as a surprising revelation to the friends of the Widows' Home and the general cause of social reform in the Deccan and our Presidency. There can be no question, whatsoever, let us put it down most emphatically, of finding fault with or throwing personal blame on Professor Karve, or of belittling his great past services. He himself will however be the last person not to allow people to differ from him, and we are persuaded that most sensible people will endorse the criticisms of our 'trusted and esteemed friend' on the Nishkam Karma Math and its ways, on its obsession over the Mahila Vidyalaya, on the

irresponsible and autocratic manner in which these two institutions are managed, and on the untoward results produced thereby on the present condition and future prospects of the Widows' Home. We confess that we for one feel most anxious on account of the Widows' Home. For the Math and its quixotic ideals we care little and few will take much interest in its fortunes. The Mahila Vidyalaya—aiming merely at giving higher education to girls of all kinds and incidentally at raising the age of marriage—is by no means a novel institution or the only one of its kind. With the thriving Female High School at Poona, with the very well conducted Chanda Ramji and St. L.Sc. Society's and other Girls' High Schools in Bombay, with the new High Schools for Girls established at Amraoti, Gwalior and Indore and with the sure prospect of similar institutions springing up elsewhere, even the total disappearance of the Mahila Vidyalaya would be no irreparable calamity. The Widows' Home, on the other hand, is an institution, the sacredness of whose mission of altruistic charity requires no expounding; and the fact of its being the only institution of the kind in the Deccan is one which entitles it to the most solicitous care and support of all friends of social reform. If, therefore, as the writer of our contributed article shows, it is the Widows' Home that is suffering, the situation developed at Poona requires promptest and effective remedies. Our friend does not play the role of a mere destructive critic. He has detailed suggestions to make and these seem to be not only very well thought of, but also conceived in a spirit of amity and compromise. We should very much like to learn what Professor Karve has to say in regard to them. We should also welcome suggestions from the thinking public. We are anxious for nothing else but a satisfactory settlement. An honest endeavour to bring about such settlement has been the only motive for our taking up the subject, the information

given to us showing clearly that an impasse has developed on the subject between the workers and controllers of the three institutes at Poona and that a free public discussion would best help a right solution.”

(Atma-Vritta, 3rd edition, pages 289-290)

“The happy union of the three institutions was brought about in the beginning of 1915. The *Sevaks* and *Sevikas* of the Math were enlisted as life-workers of the Hindu Widows’ Home Association and this now became a boarding school for both widows as well as married and unmarried girls and women. The High School was appropriately named as ‘Mahilashram’, indicative of the union of ‘Anath Balikashram’ and the ‘Mahila Vidyalaya’. The original scheme of maintaining and educating, at the expense of the institution, promising young widows was retained and now forty to fifty widows are being thus educated. The constitution of the Widows’ Home Association was adapted to the new circumstances and modelled on the plan of the Deccan Education Society. The aims and objects of the Association remained intact as already there was provision for the education of non-widows. “Union is Strength”, says the proverb, and on the disappearance of differences, the united efforts opened up a fine prospect of healthy growth of the combined institutions. There were a hundred and ten inmates in the Widows’ Home and ninety-one in the Mahila Vidyalaya. They made a fine residential school. New and capable life-members were admitted and the ground was prepared for the establishment of the Women’s University, about which there was not the least idea at that time, but which flashed on my mind a few months later ....”

(Looking Back, page 95)

## The Seed and The Plant

It was an August morning in 1915. Professor Karve was no longer burdened with the duties of a professor now. He worked at his table in the office of the Ashram at Hingne. He was now glad to be able to devote undivided attention to the work of the Ashram. And there was enough work to engage all his time and energies.

The peon brought the morning mail and placed it on Anna's table. Setting aside the work in hand, he opened the letters one by one. Among them there was a packet which contained a pamphlet. He opened it and, as he turned the pages, he found that it contained an account of the work of the Japanese Women's University.

The idea of a university for women was not altogether new to his mind. He had always felt, and very strongly, that the principal aim of the education of women should be to equip them with a training that would make them efficient housewives and mothers. Again and again, he had stressed this particular aim and the necessity of having a special course of studies for women in the annual reports of his institutions and in the occasional circulars he issued for specific purposes. With this aim in view he had evolved the conception of a Maharashtra Women's University, where higher education through the medium of the mothertongue would be available. Although he had nursed the idea with fondness, he regarded it as too ambitious for him to take up. For nearly ten years, it had remained with him without assuming a definite shape.

Fully absorbed as his mind was at that moment with the affairs of the Ashram and the Vidyalaya, Anna did not think of giving more attention to the pamphlet on the Japanese experiment in the field of women's higher education than just turning over its pages hurriedly. He then put it into the drawer. In a short time, he forgot all about it.

The Indian National Congress was to hold its annual session in Bombay during the Christmas holidays of that year. According to the practice which was started by Mr. Justice Ranade nearly thirty years before, the annual session of the National Social Conference also was to be held in Bombay immediately after the Congress session and at the same place where it was held. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, General Secretary of the Social Conference, wrote to Professor Karve inviting him to preside over the Conference at its Bombay session.

Having always regarded himself as a humble person doing his work in the remote corner of Hingne, Anna was altogether unprepared for an invitation of that kind. He thought that he was entirely unequal to the task of presiding over the deliberations of an All-India Conference. He lost no time in writing to Sir Narayan Chandavarkar humbly and thankfully declining the honour. Sir Narayan was not a person who would regard the refusal as the final word. The proposal to invite Professor Dhondo Keshav Karve, the pioneer in the cause of reform for women in Maharashtra, was accepted by all. Sir Narayan ultimately succeeded in persuading Professor Karve to accept the invitation.

After he agreed to go to Bombay to preside over the National Social Conference, Professor Karve remembered the pamphlet on the Japanese Women's University which he had received about four weeks before. Fortunately, it was lying safe in the drawer in which he had kept it. He took it out and

began to read it. The idea of a separate university for women came back to him, and he began to study carefully the account given in the pamphlet: As he read it, the idea took hold of his mind and then he decided to have the idea of a women's university for Maharashtra as the theme of his presidential address.

The Women's University in Japan was founded in 1900 by those who felt that the Japanese women must not lag behind in the process of the national reconstruction, which was taking place in the country. It was made clear that the aim of those who thought of founding a separate university was neither to copy the higher institutions for women in America and Europe nor to rival the men's university courses in Japan. What the promoters of the University aimed at was to frame curricula of study which would suit the mental and physical conditions of women at that time, and gradually to raise their standard in accordance with the general progress attained.

What appealed to Professor Karve most was the emphasis that was laid by the promoters of the Japanese University on the life of the home as the main sphere of women's activities. It was here that the woman was to take her place as the presiding genius by directing the activities of the life of the home and the family. That was the basis of the well-being of society and the nation. The promoters wanted her to become an equal partner of man in the task of national uplift which was undertaken and was being carried out in Japan for fifty or sixty years with enthusiasm and conspicuous success. Those who thought of founding a separate university for women in Japan had become aware of the one-sided progress that was taking place in the country.

One specific purpose the promoters of the Women's University kept before their eyes was to find equal and adequate opportunities for women who would not think of getting

married. It was recognised that such women could play an important role in nation-building activities.

The three guiding principles were (1) to educate women as human beings for the development of their personalities, (2) to equip them to become good wives and mothers if they wished to marry, and (3) to educate them as members of the nation and as participants in the task of building the nation.

Professor Karve pondered over the various features of the efforts which were being made for the furtherance of the cause of women's education in Japan. He took the principles which had guided the founders of the Women's University in Japan as the basis of discussion of the theme in his address. For this purpose he carefully and critically studied the progress of the movement in Japan.

Professor Karve was careful enough not to accept everything that was being done there as the model for the experiment which he thought he would try for the higher education of the women of Maharashtra. There was, however, one feature which struck him. The Japanese Women's University was altogether free from the control of the Japanese Government and did not receive any financial help from the Government. It had, however, the moral and material support of members of the Japanese royal family and of individual officers of the Government in their personal capacity.

As he read and re-read the pamphlet, he was seized with the idea of doing something in the direction. He spoke to those who were intimately connected with the work of the Ashram and was happy to see that they supported the idea. His colleague of the Nishkam Karma Math, Mr. Gadgil, did more than giving expression merely in words to his sympathy for the new cause. He wrote to Professor Karve on December 21, 1915, and offered ten thousand rupees, all that he was able to save after making provision for the maintenance of his wife and only daughter.

The donation was offered for the college to be conducted at Hingne by the proposed Women's University for Maharashtra. The life-workers of the Ashram who were graduates also gave an assurance that they would work in the college without expecting salaries higher than those they were getting at that time.

The urge now became irresistible. Something had to be done and without loss of time. The date of the Social Conference was the 30th of December. During the next two or three days, Professor Karve met members of the Managing Committee of the Ashram. The response he had from these members who included Dr. Bhandarkar, Mrs. Ramabai Ranade, Professor Bhate, Dr. H. S. Deo, Professor Sahasrabuddhe and Dr. P. D. Gune was very encouraging. It was not possible for him to convene a meeting. A circular was, therefore, sent round. It stated :

"The Hindu Widows' Home Association should try to establish a women's university for Maharashtra to give education through the medium of Marathi with the English language as a compulsory subject and that the first college of the University be started as soon as possible."

Having obtained the approval of the members of the Committee, Professor Karve now turned to the task of giving the final touches to his presidential address. He showed it to his friend, Mr. K. Natarajan, the renowned editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*. Mr. Natarajan went through the address and made useful suggestions, but he told Professor Karve that he did not at all like his idea of founding a women's university.

Several others whose opinions Professor Karve valued also opposed the idea or sounded a note of caution. Among them was Dr. R. P. Paranjpye. On the eve of the National Social Conference, a biographical sketch of the President-elect

written by Dr. Paranjpye was published. About Karve's new idea, Dr. Paranjpye wrote :

"Mr. Karve's life work has shown stages of a regular evolution. Has the process of this evolution stopped with the consolidation of all his educational institutions into one institution? He does not think so, Before his mind's eye he finds floating a women's university evolving out of his school. He aspires to make Hingne the centre of all work for the uplift of women.

"A Women's University is certainly the normal course of evolution for women's educational institutions. But, if we may venture to give a word of caution, we will say that *festina lente*—*hasten slowly*—is still fit to be the guiding principle of conscious evolution."

Dr. Paranjpye was not the only one among Professor Karve's well-wishers who held this view, They had, for the basis of their observations, the history of Professor Karve's efforts in the field of women's education. About these efforts, Dr. Paranjpye observed:

"His little hostel in the city with two or three widows took twenty years to become a full high school. That school has yet to pass its first matriculate. Its funds are not very great, though what funds it has are all to be ascribed to the indomitable energy of Mr. Karve himself."

Dr. R. G, Bhandarkar was Professor Karve's guide and counsellor in all his ventures. In a conversation which he had about the same time with another leader of social reform, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Dr. Bhandarkar expressed the same doubts and fears which Dr. Paranjpye had expressed in his biographical sketch. He said :

"Yes, Professor Karve is now busy with his new project of a women's university, but he has not paid any heed to a

suggestion which I have been making about the Anath Balikashram for a long time. It is now more than twenty years since the Ashram was founded. During this period we have not been able to have a single widow or girl passing at the Matriculation Examination. I have been trying to impress on his mind the necessity and usefulness of collecting information about the girls whom we brought up and educated in the Ashram and who have now gone out to take their places in life, but beyond getting a reply that they are all doing well in comfortable positions, I have not been able to get any useful information.”

Professor Karve knew that the advice given by his well-wishers to hasten slowly as Dr. Paranjpye had told him was sound. It had, however, now become a habit, almost a principle, with him to act at once, if act he must. As he says in the English version of his autobiography:

“It was a sound and prudent advice. But I was advancing in age and was already 57. Therefore, if any hazardous step was desirable, it was necessary to take time by the forelock. I knew the difficulties that had to be faced and the chances of failure far outnumbered those of success. The idea had to be given a trial at any risk. I thought that failure was no disgrace if sincere and unsparing efforts were made.”<sup>1</sup>

It was the dream of an idealist. It was like a madman taking a leap in the dark. It was all too clear even to persons who had known him very intimately and for many years that it would be impossible to hold him back. Dr. Paranjpye who had stayed with him for many years and grown under his eye knew that his words of caution would be of no avail. A few weeks before he wrote the biographical sketch, he had written the Introduction to Professor Karve’s autobiography published

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1. *Looking Back*, p. 101.

by the editor of *Masik Manoranjan*. About Professor Karve as a reformer, he wrote:

“In matters of secondary importance—even those concerning social reform—he is not very dogmatic—for, as far as possible, he does not like to hurt or cause pain to anyone. But in matters in which a principle is involved he would not budge an inch and will not sacrifice the principle for any-thing. In matters of real and abiding reform and in those which he is convinced are of vital necessity, he moves on and acts in the face of obstacles, however formidable.”

The session of the National Social Conference in Bombay began on December 30. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, General Secretary of the Conference, was also the Chairman of the Reception Committee. He welcomed the delegates who came from different parts of the country. In his speech, Sir Narayan described the President-elect of the Conference as a silent and tireless worker and one of the greatest bene factors to the womanhood of the Bombay Presidency.

The resolution formally proposing Professor Karve to the chair was moved by Mr. Gokulelas Kahandas Parekh, a veteran social worker of Bombay, and was seconded by Mr. Bhupendranath Basu of Calcutta. The resolution was further supported by Rao Bahadur R. N. Mudholkar of Nagpur.

After making a brief reference to the problems of social reform in general in his address, the President of the Conference dealt at length with the question of the education of women in the country. He began by quoting paragraph No. 83 of the well-known Wood’s Despatch of 1854 on education. It said :

‘The importance of female education in India cannot be overrated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence of which is now afforded on an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their

daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men.”

The two principles which Professor Karve enunciated as the basis of the secondary and higher education of women were:

- (1) The most natural and therefore efficient medium of instruction is the learner’s mother-tongue.
- (2) Women, as a class, have different functions to fulfil in the social economy from those of men.

He did not want to prevent all women from having those opportunities which were available for men in the field of education. In making this point clear, he said:

“I do not mean that the way should be rigorously barred against those whose ambition would be to beat men on their own ground and compete with them for prizes and honours in the existing universities. Those who would be in a position by intellectual, physical and financial equipment to do so would certainly be glorious ornaments to their kind and also to the whole community in the present conditions. But we must recognise that both national and social economy require that women should occupy a station of their own distinct from that of men. That they are as integral a part of the social organism as men is beyond question, but that the office they have to fill is different, though equal—perhaps greater—in importance, is equally true.”

Professor Karve’s proposals and his scheme of a separate university for women evoked very lively interest. It was as enthusiastically received as it was criticised, but it gave food for thought to those who were interested in the cause of the education of women. Copies of the address he delivered as President of the Social Conference were distributed and reached far and wide. After about two months, he received a

letter from Miss Margaret E. Roberts, Headmistress of the Girls' Grammar School, Bradford, asking him to send her 150 copies of the address for distribution among the members of the Teachers' Association. Miss Roberts added that she was prepared to pay the cost if a reprint of the address was necessary.

Shortly after his return from Bombay, Professor Karve took the next step. He called an informal meeting of friends at the Fergusson College. Among those who attended the meeting were Dr. Paranjpye and Mr. Haribhau Apte who, with a few others, had expressed their disapproval of the scheme of a women's university; Professor K. R. Kanitkar and Professor H. G. Limaye who wholeheartedly supported the idea, and a few others who were not able to make up their minds.

It was decided at the meeting that the scheme should be taken up, and that the aim should be to have a women's university for Maharashtra. It was also decided to have two separate electorates of graduate voters—one consisting of those who paid an annual subscription of ten rupees or a donation of three hundred rupees, and another of those who paid five rupees every year or a donation of a hundred and fifty rupees.

Professor Kanitkar, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the scheme, gave a donation of three hundred rupees immediately after the meeting was over.

It was not an easy task to decide what shape the scheme should finally take. Friends and supporters offered various suggestions, and most of them differed from one another on various points. Sir Sankaran Nair, who was Member for Education in the Governor General's Executive Council, looked at the scheme with a kindly eye, but said he would consider the possibility of giving Government aid to the

scheme only after it was launched and had shown some progress. When he went to Banaras to meet Sir Sankaran Nair, Professor Karve took the opportunity to meet Dr. Annie Besant who advised him to have a women's University On an All-India basis. She was glad to hear about the proposed university and gave Professor Karve a donation of a hundred and fifty rupees. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore was greatly interested in the proposal and particularly liked the idea that education was to be given through the mother-tongue. He advised Professor Karve not to subject his scheme to an elaborate process of delay in order to secure Government recognition. "It is far better," Dr. Tagore wrote, "that you should win it at the end than pray for it in the beginning."

Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield, had paid a visit to the Widows' Home while he was in India as a member of the Public Service Commission. According to him, "the establishment of a university for women would put the crown upon the noble work which you are doing in India for female education." He wished the founder success 'from the bottom of my heart', and added:

"Doubtless you will meet with obstacles, but these your moral courage will assuredly overcome."

Professor Karve had not written to that great friend of India, Sir William Wedderburn, when he wrote to other people; infact he had never an occasion to know him personally. When he read in the papers about the will of Miss Everest, the daughter of the explorer of the highest peak of the Himalayas, Mount Everest, he thought of writing to Sir William. She had written in her will that whatever was left from her estate after giving specific gifts, should be given to an educational institution in India working independently of Government. If the trustees were not satisfied with any of the existing institutions, they were to start a new one. Karve thought that

Sir William was the person who could make inquiries, if requested, and advise him whether he might send a formal application on behalf of the Women's University. He sent to him the literature about the Widows' Home and the University and wrote to him requesting him to make the necessary inquiries. In his reply of the 19th July 1916, Sir William Wedderburn wrote :

"I have read with the greatest interest and sympathy the printed papers you have sent me and you may rest assured that I will do all I can to help your valuable undertaking."

About the time the Women's University was started, Government had invited the opinions of leading people in regard to women's education. A friend of Professor Karve who had not liked the idea of the Women's University had sent a letter to Government dated 25th June 1916, expressing his opinion. He had also sent a copy of the same to Sir William Wedderburn. He sent to Professor Karve an extract from Sir William's reply to him. Sir William wrote:

"I confess that my sympathies are with Professor Karve's gallant attempt to found a women's university. It may be a forlorn hope, but no great stronghold is taken without such an attack, and as the attempt is being made, I would gladly see it supported by all enlightened friends of women's higher education."

Sir William Wedderburn had to carry on systematic work for the uplift of India and for that purpose he had utilised a fund named India Benefit Fund. When, after his death, this fund had to be finally disposed of, Mr. Pollock sent £ 150 to the Widows' Home and £ 100 to the Indian Women's University.

While these messages, good wishes and assurances gave considerable encouragement to Professor Karve, they also provided the fortitude he needed very much to keep his mind

calm against the criticism which was being levelled against the scheme. He was particularly pained to see how vehemently and with sustained vigour the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* wielded his powerful pen to criticise his project. On February 27, 1916, Mr. Natarajan wrote:

“The immense personal devotion and sacrifice which enabled him (Professor Karve) to make the Hindu Widows’ Home at Poona what it is today are bound to make any project which he conceives, if not a success, at least a serious distraction, hampering progress along established lines. We do not think the scheme will succeed; it certainly does not deserve to succeed. What it may do is to lead to divided counsels and to further postponement of progress along established lines.”

Mr. Natarajan was not without sympathy or admiration for the work which Professor Karve was doing in the field of women’s education. He felt it was his duty “to express our disbelief in it (Mr. Karve’s new project) in unmistakable terms” because he was sure that “notwithstanding Professor Karve’s excellent intentions, the new project will act as a stumbling block in the way of women’s education”.

Without malice towards even the worst among his critics and with the faith that their criticism was offered with the best of intentions, Professor Karve marked every word of what they said or wrote because he believed that it had a lesson for him. He wrote in his autobiography:

“Without allowing myself to be filled with an undue satisfaction or pride by words of sympathy or to be disheartened by words of criticism, I tried earnestly to maintain the balance of my mind and judgment.”

During Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to Poona, Professor Karve met him. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that he should see him in Bombay after a few days. When Professor Karve

explained to him his new idea, he approved of it and particularly liked the idea of making the mother-tongue the medium of instruction even in the higher stages. He, however, expressed his disapproval of the provision to have English as a compulsory subject. It was Mahatmaji's considered opinion that even in higher education English should be a voluntary subject. Professor Karve found it difficult to agree with him and politely told him:

"It will be our misfortune to proceed without your sympathy if you insist that English should be kept as a voluntary subject."

Gandhiji kept quiet for some time. Then he said, "Mr. Karve, because it is you, I yield. However, my opinion is still the same."

Gandhiji offered to subscribe ten rupees annually. Professor Karve was fully satisfied with the assurance he had from Gandhiji and his moral support. When he told him that he did not want any financial help from him, Gandhiji would not listen to him and requested him to collect his subscription by sending the annual report to him. Professor Karve accompanied Gandhiji to Ahmedabad where he delivered a lecture on the aims and objects of the Women's University at a meeting presided over by Gandhiji.

In Madras, Professor Karve was the guest of the Right Honourable Srinivasa Sastri of the Servants of India Society. Mr. Sastri was inclined to look upon the project as a utopian idea and told Professor Karve that he was surprised to see him come like a madman all the way to Madras for support. In one day, Professor Karve was able to enlist the support of about a dozen persons including Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, the renowned editor of the *Hindu*. Mr. Sastri was so impressed with the perseverance and devotion with which Professor Karve was pursuing his object that before the day was over

he also offered his own name to be included in the Graduates' Electorate. He went further and gave Professor Karve letters of introduction to a number of friends in Bangalore where also he had a very favourable response. The other places he visited were Calcutta, Lahore and Jullundur. While he was visiting these places, his other colleagues also were going round. Among them Mrs. Venubai Namjoshi toured Vidarbha and other parts of the Central Provinces. Parvatibai went to the Karnataka where she visited places like Belgaum, Dharwar, Hubli, Gadag and Bijapur. Miss Krishnabai Thakur, another worker, toured Central India.

Within a short period of four months, they were able to enlist about twelve hundred members for the Graduates' Electorate.

After his return to Poona in April, Professor Karve got preparations made for the election of the Senate from among the members of the Graduates' Electorate. Sixty members of the Senate including five women were elected.

Before the first meeting of the Senate was held, Professor Karve had to find two persons for the offices of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the University. For the Chancellor's office he could think only of his old guide and counsellor, Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar. He felt a little doubtful whether Dr. Bhandarkar would accept the office, particularly in view of the criticism which was being directed against the project by persons like the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*. With a nervous heart, he and Professor Divekar went to see the veteran pandit at his summer residence at the hill-station of Lonavla. They first met Sir Narayan Chandavarkar who also was at Lonavla at the time and, accompanied by him, went to Dr. Bhandarkar. At first, it appeared that the old man who was nearing eighty at the time was in no mood to accept the office. It was probably his personal appreciation of the work which Professor Karve had

been doing for nearly twenty years under his own guidance that ultimately prevailed, and Professor Karve returned to Poona with success in his mission.

For the other notice, he asked Mr. Srinivasa Sastri. Declining the honour, Mr. Sastri assured Professor Karve that he would induce Dr. Paranjpye to accept it. Professor Karve himself could not speak to Dr. Paranjpye on account of the views he had already expressed on the project. He was, therefore, delighted when Dr. Paranjpye himself came to him and wrote his own name in the list of graduates who had joined the electorate, adding the figure of five hundred rupees as his donation to the new venture. It was, therefore, not difficult for Mr. Sastri to persuade Dr. Paranjpye to accept the Vice-Chancellor's office.

The first meeting of the Senate of the Women's University was held in Poona on June 3 and 4, 1916.

Less than nine months back the idea of a women's university, no bigger than a mustard seed, was planted for the first time in Professor Karve's mind by the unexpected arrival of the pamphlet about the Women's University in Japan. Within this short period, it took firm root in the soil of his own tireless efforts and the co-operation of his friends. For the initial success of his project Professor Karve had reason to be grateful to many friends and well-wishers, but the first among them remained unknown to him for four years. During this period, it had remained a mystery as to who could have sent the pamphlet, so full of portents for the remaining years of his life, which he had received on that morning in August 1915.

Professor Karve never failed to make a grateful reference in his annual reports to the pamphlet which had inspired him. A copy of one of these reports or of his pointed appeal must have reached the hands of Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta of

Banaras. He wrote to Professor Karve in 1919 that he had visited Japan in 1915 with a friend of his, Professor Benoy Kumar Sirkar of Calcutta. During their visit to the Women's University there, they were greatly impressed with what they saw. They purchased half a dozen copies of the booklet which gave an account of the University and sent them to some of those Indians who, they knew, were working in the field of education and particularly that of women's education. Among these was Professor Karve of whose institutions at Hingne they had heard.

On June 3, 1916, the idea of an Indian Women's University assumed a form and a name.

## S.N.D. Thackersey Women's University

Six girls from the Mahilashram of Hingne appeared for the Entrance Examination which was held by the newly founded Women's University in the last week of June 1916. Four of them were successful. They were admitted to the First Year Class of the college which was named 'Mahila Pathashala'. A fifth student who joined the Mahila Pathashala was Revati Ketkar who had passed the Matriculation Examination of the University of Bombay.

The Senate appointed Professor D. K. Karve himself as the first Principal of the College. On July 6, 1916, the new College started functioning.

His work as Principal of the College required him to remain at Hingne, but he knew that his services would be more useful in the task of collecting funds for the University and the College and for making their work known far and wide to enlist support. Professor Karve, therefore, had Mr. Narayan Mahadev Athavale appointed as Principal of the College and handed over charge of the post of the Registrar of the University to Mr. Hari Ramchandra Divekar.

With the alms-bowl in his hand, Professor Karve once again set out on his mission. He went from town to town, from district to district. There was hardly any part of India he did not visit. Wherever he went, he spoke to the people and told them about the University and won their sympathy.

At the end of the first four years of its existence, the Indian Women's University had a balance of Rs. 2,16,041.65

after meeting all expenses. This was the outcome of Professor Karve's tireless efforts. He was able to win the sympathy of all classes of people. Among them, there were a few wealthy well-wishers, but his sympathisers were mostly from the middle classes.

The progress of the academic work of the University during the first four years was very slow and was not very encouraging. On the staff of the College there were professors and lecturers with ability and attainments, but the number of students was small. It did not go beyond 20. In 1919, the University sent out its first and only graduate. The number rose to three in 1920.

He wrote in his autobiography : "It reflects discredit upon the promoters of the University for not being able to show much better results. Doubtless there were extenuating circumstances and the work of the University had to be carried on against odds. There was no recognition from Government and the Certificates and Degrees of the Women's University had no market value. So even after the gift of the late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, it took many years before the University could make any appreciable progress."<sup>1</sup>

"I am doubtful whether any attempt has been made in the world to start a university depending on the contributions from the middle and upper middle class people only. In Japan Mr. Naruse got the idea in 1895, prepared the ground for five years and started actual work in 1900. There too he did not depend upon Government (and even now the University is working independently of Government), but he was able to secure help even from the royal family and the moneyed classes. In the independent country of Japan, where national feeling had been developed and slavish imitation was detested,

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1. *Looking Back*, pages 123-24

his path was not so difficult as ours in India. Several attempts made in India to start universities independent of Government help had failed for one reason or another. This attempt would have succeeded better if it had been taken up by a more capable worker. However, I tried my utmost. I was busy all these four years doing propaganda work and collecting subscriptions. At the end of these first four years, our saving after defraying all expenses came to Rs. 2,16,000, mostly in the face value of three and a half per cent Government paper. For this I travelled from one end of the country to the other, visited important places and approached thousands of people receiving even fractions of a rupee, thus awakening sympathy even in the lower middle classes:<sup>1</sup>

The slow progress of the University and the lack of enthusiasm shown by girls themselves made Professor Karve, sad. Some of the girls who had joined the Mahilashram with a view to joining the Mahila Pathashala of the University later left it and joined the Girls' School at Huzurpaga. They did so because they realised later that the examination conducted by the University and the degrees conferred by it were not recognised by Government.

Professor Karve was not disheartened. The cause was a good one and it was his faith that it must succeed. Without losing courage he worked. He found comfort in the thought that one of the greatest needs of the University—that of any public cause—was being satisfactorily met. He had no cause to feel disappointed about the response his appeal for funds evoked and the achievements of his tours. Help and sympathy came from unexpected quarters. This, he felt, was a very hopeful sign.

He had written to Sir William Wedderburn requesting him to see if some money could be found for the University

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1. *Looking Back*, p. 127

out of Miss Everest's estate. Owing to the war which was going on, the value of the investments had depreciated, and there was nothing left from Miss Everest's property for an Indian institution. Professor Karve's efforts in this direction, however, had success in a different way. Sir William Wedderburn's sympathy and enthusiasm for Professor Karve's activities for the women of India were so roused that he wrote in *India*, a weekly paper, a brief account of those activities. Although it was not possible for him to obtain any help from Miss Everest's funds for Professor Karve's institutions, he sent him his own donation of three hundred rupees. At the request of Mrs. Henry Fawcett, Sir William wrote an article in *Jus Suffraji* on the Indian Women's University. He sent marked copies of the paper to a number of influential people in England and India including Lord Morley, Lord Bryce and Lord Reay, the Viceroy of India, and the Governors of Bengal, Madras and Bombay.

For every pice he received as a help to any of his institutions, Professor Karve felt deeply grateful. He was grateful to everyone, but his feelings were more profound when help came from friends of limited means. Among such friends there was one, who lived in far-off Uganda. Before he went to Africa. Dr. Vithal Raghoba Lande had visited the Widows' Home where one of his relatives was an inmate. Dr. Lande died in Africa on March 30, 1917, five days after he gave the final touches to his will. According to this will, he had appointed the trustees of "Karve Female University (or whatever be the name of the Institution at Poona, India)" as his trustees in India.

The trustees in Africa sent Rs. 40,000 to Professor Karve for disposal in accordance with Dr. Lande's wishes expressed in his will. Dr. Lande's old mother, his two wives and other

relatives were generous enough not to raise any objections to giving a major portion of the amount to the Women's University. From the amount which Professor Karve received, a building was erected in Poona for the Kanyashala. The building was named after Vithal Raghoba Lande, the benefactor who gave the largest portion of his savings for the good cause which Professor Karve had undertaken.

Not disheartened by the slow pace at which his project was moving forward, not bowed under the weight of criticism, and always grateful for the sympathy and support he received, Professor Karve marched on. He marched on with faith and even with confidence. As he persevered and went on, his efforts did not fail to have a favourable effect even on the minds of his most formidable critics. On July 8, 1917, a year after the Indian Women's University was founded, the following comment appeared in the editorial columns of the *Indian Social Reformer*:

“We are glad to join in the welcome accorded to Professor Karve's Women's University and in the hope that experiment will prove a success. The need for facilities for women's education is so vast and pressing that it is foolish to pin 'our faith on any one plan and method. Numerous and repeated experiments are necessary to determine what the best and most suitable scheme is in the conditions of the country.”

It was an unusual tribute to Professor Karve's devotion from the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*. He had formerly attacked his project bitterly and in strong terms on the ground that “notwithstanding Professor Karve's excellent intentions, the new project will act as a stumbling block in the way of women's education” and was constrained to express his disbelief in it in unmistakable terms. Now after sixteen months, he had come forward to confess that it was foolish to pin our faith on any one plan and method”.

With the opening of the year 1918, there was evidence everywhere in the country of an earnest desire to celebrate Professor Karve's sixty-first birthday on the 18th of April of that year, and thus to place on record the gratitude which his countrymen and country women felt for his efforts for nearly a quarter of a century for the raising of the status of Indian women. The occasion was celebrated in the midst of universal affection and respect. The main function was held in Poona and was presided over by Dr. Ramkrishna G. Bhandarkar. The women of Bombay and Poona held separate functions. The chairman of the women's meeting was Dr. Kashibai Nowrange of Bombay. At this function a purse and an address were presented to Professor Karve on behalf of Indian women. The address paid a glowing tribute to Professor Karve's pioneering efforts and his zeal. The women who honoured him on the occasion of his sixty-first birthday had before their eyes the changes which had come over Indian society and in particular over the conditions of women during the twenty-five years which were crowded with the activities undertaken by him. Recalling not only his great services to the cause of the emancipation of women but also the great hardships he had suffered in those early years when he was working in the Fergusson College and, at the same time, doing the spade-work of the Ashram, the address acknowledged the fact that as a result of Professor Karve's efforts and achievements, it had become possible for the women themselves to take up the activities for their welfare and enlightenment.

Another notable feature of the celebrations was the special number of the *Masik Manoranjan* which the editor, Mr. Kashinath Raghunath Mitra, who had published his autobiography in 1915, brought out on the occasion. The special number was unique in several respects. It contained articles on the life and work of the founder of the Widows'

Home, the Mahila Vidyalaya and the Mahila Vidyapeeth, and also articles dealing with the various problems concerning women's education, their social status and the general awakening which had taken place since the beginning of the twentieth century. Mrs. Shrirangammal, a social worker from Bangalore, placed Professor Karve in the high rank to which belonged Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade, Vivekanand and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Mr. Natarajan paid a brief but heartfelt tribute to Professor Karve's work for the women of India. He could not help differing from Professor Karve, he said in such matters as the Women's University or the restrictions Professor Karve had imposed against the marriage of the widows of the Anath Balikashram so long as they belonged to the Ashram, but that did not come in the way of his appreciating Professor Karve's great achievements which. Mr. Natarajan added, entitled him to a place of honour occupied by very few Indians. Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, Professor Karve's cousin, who had known him well for over thirty years, wrote that even though Professor Karve had become a pillar of strength to the whole of India, he was the same old Anna to the intimate circle of his relatives. It was impossible for them to think of him as a great man as he was as simple in behaviour and appearance as the twenty-year-old Dhondu who had left Murud forty years before for Bombay to join an English school.

Many of Professor Karve's friends who generally admired his work for women regarded his project of the women's university as a wild dream. If his idea of a separate university for women was a wild dream, more wild and more fantastic still was his idea of sending Parvatibai Athavale to England and America for a study of the English language.

Once the idea was born, he would not allow it to remain idle with him. He proceeded at once to give it a concrete shape.

About this idea and his resolve to pursue it, Professor Karve says in his autobiography :

“It is a weakness in man to run after a forlorn hope even after all efforts for its fulfilment have proved futile. I was, no exception to this characteristic of human nature. I could see only one alternative—the last one left and the most difficult one, that of sending Parvatibai to England or America where she would be in the midst of people with whom she would have to speak in English only during all hours of the day. Even if this episode was destined to end in a tragedy, I would see it to the last act of it until the curtain finally dropped on the tragic end !”

On October 5, 1918, a lady of forty-six who was already a grandmother sailed for America *via* Japan with the object of studying English.

In the annual report of the Widows’ Home for 1920, Professor Karve wrote:

“Knowing fully well that for a woman of forty-six, it was nothing less than a leap in the dark to undertake a journey to foreign countries, Parvatibai made up her mind to undertake it. She has no financial resources to fall back on, and yet she has not taken a pie from the funds of the Ashram. I induced her to face perils which I would not have faced myself. I must confess that she could make up her mind only because of the encouragement I gave her, and I now confess also that it was cruel of me to have so encouraged her. However, I have this compensation—that I did all this only because I had realised that Parvatibai has in her certain qualities far above the common run, and that those qualities would bear fruit only when they come under the influence of certain unusual and trying circumstances.”

The women of Bombay and Maharashtra had given Professor Karve a purse containing twenty-five hundred rupees

on the occasion of his sixty-first birthday. He handed over the whole sum with two hundred rupees of his own to Parvatibai for her expenses. He knew that he was diverting the precious sum given to him by his sisters for a venture the results of which he could not foresee. He, therefore, resolved to treat it as a loan taken by himself and to set apart the amount with interest for some deserving cause.

Parvatibai returned to India after an absence of about twenty months. During her stay in America she collected funds for the Widows' Home. The amount she brought with her was separately invested for an endowment to be known as the American Scholarship Fund. She acquired some facility in speaking the English language during her stay abroad, but it was not of a permanent nature. The purpose for which she went to America was not fulfilled, but the undertaking was not altogether in vain. Apart from the collections she was able to make, she returned with her mind enriched by her experiences and by the hardships she had to suffer in many of the places abroad and with a broader outlook. Soon after her return she plunged herself once again in her work for the Home.

Professor Karve was sixty. He was an old man now. Was he tired? After twenty-five years of hard, continuous work, it would have been natural for any man in much better circumstances and with a stronger physique, to say that after sixty he would like to retire. If someone else had told Professor Karve or if he had said to himself that it was now time to rest, something in him would have at once revolted. That something was the urge to live, to toil and to serve. There was real devotion in the innumerable voices which joined in the prayer on the 18th of April, 1918 that Professor Karve may live to an age of a hundred years.

Generosity is another name for Bombay. One of her citizens who gave her that name, was Sir Vithaldas D.

Thackersey, an industrialist and businessman. He was the head of the House of Thackerseys. Successful and prosperous in business, and one of those belonging to the first rank in textile industry. Sir Vithaldas was even better known for his munificent charity.

In 1917, this large-hearted man gave a thousand rupees to Professor Karve's University for Women for giving scholarships in the name of his mother. Next year he gave another thousand and promised to continue it every year. .

In 1919, Sir Vithaldas planned to go on a world tour with a party of friends which included Sir M. Visvesvaraya and Seth Mulraj Khatau. As Lady Thackersey and two other ladies also were to go with them, Sir Vithaldas wrote to Professor Karve requesting him to find a suitable companion for them from one of his institutions.

Professor Karve recommended Mrs. Seetabai Annigeri who had come to the Ashram as a young widow twelve years before. Now she was a student in the Women's University's College at Poona. Premlilabai, Lady Thackersey, liked the young lady as she was intelligent and smart enough for the work for which she was chosen.

The party first visited the countries of the East. During their stay in Japan, Sir Vithaldas made it a point to visit the Women's University in Tokyo. At the time of their visit, there were seventeen hundred students in the colleges and schools affiliated to the University. About seven hundred of these lived in the hostels attached to the University. The work of the University and all the institutions affiliated to it made a deep impression on Sir Vithaldas' mind. He was particularly impressed with the courses of studies in the University which included such subjects as housecraft, laundry work and gardening. On his way to America he discussed with his friends what he had seen in Japan and asked Mrs. Annigeri a

number of questions about the Women's University at Hingne. He was particularly interested to know if Professor Karve had been able to find a sufficient number of earnest workers for the University.

As a result of what he saw in Japan and what he later heard from Mrs. Annigeri, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey began to have ideas about developing the Indian experiment launched by Professor Karve on the lines of the institution which he had seen in Japan.

Professor Karve was among those who went to the pier to receive them when they returned. Sir Vithaldas asked Professor Karve to see him before returning to Poona. When Professor Karve saw him again later in the afternoon, Sir Vithaldas told him that he would like to discuss with him proposals relating to the Indian Women's University.

A few weeks later, Professor Karve saw Sir Vithaldas Thackersey again at Mahabaleshwar. This time, Dr. Paranjpye and Principal Kanitkar of the Fergusson College were with him. As a result of the prolonged talks they had, Sir Vithaldas told Professor Karve that he proposed to offer a donation of Rs. 15,00,000 to the University on certain conditions. This was something Professor Karve had never expected.

Soon afterwards, a formal offer was received by Professor Karve. The offer was accompanied by certain conditions. According to one of them the University and the institutions conducted by it were to be named after Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey, mother of Sir Vithaldas. It was also laid down that the meetings of the Senate of the University should be held in Bombay and those of the Syndicate may be held either in Poona or Bombay. It was agreed that the headquarters of the University should be shifted to Bombay as soon as a suitable building was constructed for them. Sir Vithaldas Thackersey was to nominate five members of the Senate and after him they were to be nominated by the eldest

male member of the Thackersey House. The University was either to secure recognition from Government or collect a sum equal to that of Sir Vithaldas donation. A sum of Rs. 52,500 being the interest on the amount offered would be paid annually to the University till the conditions were fulfilled. Thereafter the original amount of fifteen lakhs of rupees would be handed over to the University.

As soon as the negotiations were completed, the Women's University of Hingne was named 'Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University'. The College was taken over by the University. The University also took over the Kanyashala founded in Poona by Professor G. M. Chiplunkar, a life-worker of the Ashram. It was, till then, conducted under the general supervision and control of the Hindu Widows' Association of Hingne.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey took personal interest in the activities of the University and its expansion. With his approval, a suitable site was selected for the new building for the College in Poona. The amount required for the purchase of the site was advanced by Sir Vithaldas himself. Another sum of Rs. 1,50,000 without interest was advanced by him for the construction of the building.

Like Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, his friend Seth Mulraj Khatau also had a generous heart and was ready to help good causes. He had gone to Poona for a brief stay. When Professor Karve heard of the wealthy gentleman's visit to Poona, he went to see him. Professor Mydeo, a life-worker of the Ashram, was with him.

As they entered the compound of the house in which Seth Mulraj was living, they saw a man looking impressive but clad in a simple manner sitting in the verandah of the house.

As the two approached, the gentleman sitting in the verandah asked them who they were.

"We have come to see Seth Mulraj."

"What do you want to see him for?"

"We have come to tell him about our institution and seek his help and support for it."

"Please go away. I am sorry I cannot do anything for you."

They now knew that it was Seth Mulraj himself who was talking to them. Without saying anything more Professor Karve turned to go and Professor Mydeo followed him. As they came to the gate, Professor Mydeo saw a member of Seth Mulraj's family standing there. He whispered into his ears Professor Karve's name. The man ran to Seth Mulraj and told him. Professor Karve and Professor Mydeo were immediately called back. With profuse apologies, Seth Mulraj received them. When they left his house, they had in their pockets a gift of Rs. 35,000. It helped Professor Karve to bear half the cost of the students' quarters attached to the S. N. D. Thackersey College in Poona.

It now became possible for the founder of the S. N. D. T. University to expand the field of its useful activities. The first task Professor Karve took in hand was the establishment of new schools and the affiliation of those which were in existence and were being conducted by others.

The first school to be taken over was Professor Chiplunkar's Kanyashala in Poona. It was Sir Vithaldas' wish that the University should conduct a school in Bombay and, if possible, it should have two sections, Marathi and Gujarati. Professor Karve and a friend, Mr. Lakshmanrao Nayak, saw the authorities of the Chanda Ramji Girls' High School and Mr. Gajanan Bhaskar Vaidya who was conducting the Students' Literary and Scientific Society's Girls' High School. As they did not succeed in their efforts to have either of these schools affiliated to the S. N. D. Thackersey University, they decided to start a new school. Mr. Nayak who had retired

from the Small Causes Court offered to work as Honorary Superintendent of the School which was named Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Kanyashala. Mrs. Parvatibai Athavale came to Bombay to assist Mr. Nayak in his work. After some time, Mrs. Seetabai Annigeri was appointed Superintendent of the Kanyashala. She relieved both Mr. Nayak and Mrs. Athavale.

The Vanita Vishram of Bombay gladly came forward to have its Girls' School affiliated to the S. N. D. Thackersey University. At the invitation of some friends, Professor Karve went to Satara. A beginning was made there in 1922 during the Diwali holidays. He was accompanied by Mrs. Kamalabai Deshpande who had become a *Grihitagama* (Graduate in Arts) of the new University in 1920. Within a few days of their arrival in Satara, on the *Bhaubeej* day, a girls' school was founded with Mrs. Deshpande as Superintendent.

Belgaum and Sangli soon followed. Within five years, the S. N. D. T. Women's University had a network of Girls' Schools spread all over Maharashtra in places like Poona, Bombay, Satara, Belgaum, Sangli, Wai and Sholapur. The local people in these places undertook the task of running the schools and collecting funds. They did all this under Professor Karve's guidance and with the inspiration they derived from him.

Before long, Professor Karve realised that his original project of having a Women's University for Maharashtra only was too narrow not only for his high ideal of providing facilities for higher education for girls but also in view of the need which was felt in other parts of the country for such facilities. The University had already assumed an all-India character when it was named the Bharatavarshiya Mahila Vidyapeeth (All-India University for Women), before it was re-named Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University.

In Ahmedabad, the Gujarat Mahila Pathashala was founded by the Stri Kelavani Mandal. In 1920, the Mandal decided not to send up its pupils for the Matriculation Examination of the University of Bombay but to have a school-leaving certificate examination of its own. Three girls appeared for this examination and were successful. They were admitted to the newly-founded Gujarat Mahila Pathashala which was, affiliated to the S. N. D. T. University.

The Mahila Vidyalaya of Surat was affiliated in 1922, and its example was followed by the Maharani Girls' High School of Baroda. At Bhavnagar, the Mahila Vidyalaya was founded in 1925. It was affiliated to the S. N. D. T. University in 1927.

Within a few years, the Registrar of the S. N. D. T. University was able to say with confidence in his annual report :

“The desirability of a separate university for women is not now an open question and strenuous efforts are being made to make it a success.”

Professor Karve continued to work as the organiser of the University. It was on account of his personal efforts and the influence he was able to exercise that girls' schools in Bombay and in towns like Satara, Sangli and Belgaum were affiliated to the Women's University. He was able to induce life-workers of the Widows' Home and the graduates of the University to work in these schools on small salaries. Most of these schools were founded as middle schools and by adding a higher standard every year they became full high schools in the course of a few years.

It was the good fortune of the University that eminent scholars and educationists like Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye or men in the first rank of public life like Sir Mahadev Chabal, Sir Lallubhai Shah and Sir Chunilal Mehta associated themselves with its working.

The Entrance Examination was held in four languages, *i.e.* Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi and Telugu, but at the college, education was given through the first three languages only. Girls who studied privately were allowed to appear for the Entrance Examination and for the higher examinations.

The editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* who was not in favour of a separate university for women had to acknowledge in 1927 that the self-sacrificing zeal of Professor Karve to which the Women's University at Hingne owed its existence would always be gratefully remembered by social reformers all over the country.

Mr. Natarajan was speaking as President of the Indian Social conference which had met in Madras. He said :

"In the present circumstances of our country when a sort of tradition of women's intellectual inferiority has held sway for many centuries, it is necessary, at least till that tradition is wholly destroyed, to make no distinction in the courses of study especially in the higher education open to men and women."

At the same time he had to acknowledge "that every method and every system which promises to bring the benefits of education or some kind to girls and women who would otherwise go without them is to be welcomed; from that point of view the Women's University is a very valuable and interesting experiment."

The main objection that was raised against Professor Karve's experiment by its critics was that it was based on the principle of having separate courses of studies for women. Another and an equally strong objection was that a university which had the vernacular as its medium was not in the interests of higher education of women. Professor Karve himself had no doubt in his own mind about either of these questions. Even before the Women's University was founded, he had

made it clear that while he recognised the fact that there were and always would be some women who would beat men on their own ground and compete with them for prizes and honours in the existing universities, he felt that for a large number of women it was necessary to have an education which would equip them for the place they would be called upon to—occupy—a place which was distinct from that of men. His belief in the mother-tongue as the most natural and therefore the best medium of instruction at all stages was based on sound educational principles. He, therefore, did not allow his mind to be disturbed by the objections which were raised from time to time. He would have liked more girls and women to join the Women's University, but he knew that as the examinations conducted by the University and the degrees conferred by it were not recognised by Government, the response would be poor. So long as it was not possible for the University to obtain recognition from Government, he had to depend on his own efforts and the efforts of his colleagues and on the goodness of the cause itself for the progress of the experiment which he had undertaken.

There was no lack of support and enthusiasm among the educated public. The All-India Women's Educational Conference which held its first session in Poona in 1927 lent its whole-hearted support to the idea of giving the greatest importance to a type of education which would develop in the girls the ideals of motherhood and of social service. The Conference recommended to Government that recognition should be given to educational institutions like the Indian Women's University which have been working on the experimental lines advocated by this Conference.

Even the Department of Education of the Bombay Presidency acknowledged the good work which the Women's University was doing. In its annual report for 1925-26 it said:

"A number of schools throughout the Presidency are affiliated to the Poona Women's University. Some of them are recognised by the Department. A special feature of these schools is that they use the vernacular as the medium of instruction for all subjects except English throughout the school course."

The annual report of the Education Department paid a tribute to Professor Karve's work in the following words:

"In the cause of female education, especially the education of adults, the efforts of Professor D. K. Karve on the one hand and of Mr. G. K. Devdhar on the other are commendable. Professor Karve's tiny little colony of thirty years ago has now developed into a full-fledged university for Indian women. Its special feature is that the medium of instruction is the vernacular and the aim of adapting girls' curriculum to their special needs and conditions and of retaining the simplicity of Indian style of living is steadily kept in view.

Keeping his ears open and his eyes watchful, Professor Karve gave earnest thought to all that was being said and written about his experiment.' In all things possible, he accepted the suggestions made by his friends and critics without sacrificing the principles which he had accepted after careful consideration.

In 1928, Professor Karve was able to look back with satisfaction that his efforts had not altogether been in vain. It was with pride that he could look upon the Indian Women's University founded by him as the only university in the world which owed its existence largely to the contributions of the upper middle class and even the lower middle classes.

He was seventy now. The life-workers of the Ashram brought out the second edition of his autobiography on his

seventy-first birthday. Professor Karve gladly undertook to add a few chapters to the original book and in these he mainly gave the history of the origin and growth of the University. He was able to complete these chapters in two months. He ended the closing paragraph of the last chapter with the following words :

“If there is any truth in the idea of re-birth, and if the particular form of re-birth is shaped by the desires a man’s heart is occupied with at the time of his death, I pray that the Ruler of the Universe may enable me to serve during all succeeding births the same cause I have been able to serve during this one and that my devotion for it may increase with every birth.”

On April 18, 1928, the seventy-first birthday of Professor Karve, the municipality of Poona named the road leading to Yerandavane ‘Karve Road’.

## The Tours and the Test

Since the Widow Marriage Association was founded in 1893, Professor D. K. Karve had travelled throughout India and had visited almost every important city and town in the country. For a few years, he went on lecture tours on behalf of the Association. When the Anath Balikashram was founded in 1896, he continued to utilise the long summer vacations and even the shorter winter vacations for tours to collect funds for the Ashram. It became a habit with him which stood him in good stead even after he was sixty. It also became necessary for him to visit different places and people in India either to collect funds for the S.N.D.T. University or for expanding the University's sphere of work by establishing new schools or affiliating old ones.

Until he was seventy, he had not thought of leaving the shores of India. It was at his suggestion that Parvatibai Athavale had gone to foreign lands. She had returned richer in experience and with a wider outlook. She had also been able to collect funds for the Widows' Home during her stay in America and in England.

The future of the University constantly occupied Professor Karve's thoughts. It was necessary, he felt, to make a sustained effort to enlist the sympathy and support of educated Indians for it. As he thought of the various ways of making the University and its aims more widely known, it occurred to him that if he visited England, he would be able to meet a number of young men from all parts of India who

had gone there for higher studies. Possibly, if he succeeded in impressing them with the usefulness of the work the University was doing, they would carry the impressions back with them when they returned home, and spread them among their people. There was also a possibility of making collections for the University as Parvatibai had done during her travels for the Widows' Home.

His friends and relatives did not much appreciate the idea. They told him that it was too hazardous a step for a man of his age to take. They did their best to dissuade him.

Professor Karve himself did not think that it was hazardous as his friends thought. His youngest son, Bhaskar, was at the University of Leeds in England and was about to complete his studies. Bhaskar was willing to stay on and to accompany his father during his tours in Europe and in the United States. Irawati, wife of Professor Karve's third son, Dinkar, was in Berlin, and Professor H. R. Divekar, a life-worker of the Ashram, was in Paris. With their help, he would be able to travel without difficulty. Professor Karve had also heard of two international educational conferences which were to be held during that year, one at Geneva and the other at Elsinore. These would give him an opportunity of meeting workers in the field of education from different parts of the world.

The Syndicate of the S.N.D.T. University supported Professor Karve's plan and sanctioned Rs. 5,000 for his expenses. Professor Karve looked upon this decision of the Syndicate, which was endorsed by the Senate, as a happy augury.

He sailed from Bombay by the P. & O. Steamer, *S.S. Rawalpindi* on March 16, 1929. He was not without company on board the ship. Mrs. Kamalabai Deshpande; a life-worker of the Ashram, travelled with him. She undertook the trip for

reasons of health. Mr. Keshavrao Vakil of Hyderabad was another friend who was of much help to Professor Karve during the voyage. Professor Divkar joined him at Marseilles. They reached London on April 1.

The first three months and a half were spent in England. Professor Karve took every opportunity to meet Indians and Englishmen and tell them about the Women's University. When he spoke to Englishmen, he sought to explain to them the educational and social problems in India and the efforts which were being made by educated Indians to solve them. He strove to remove, as best as he could, the misconceptions created in England and in other Western countries by certain propagandists.

At Malvern he attended a Primary Teachers' Conference where he met 125 women teachers and a few men teachers. The topic which was chosen for discussion at the Conference was "New Ideals in Education". Professor Karve was asked to speak on "Women's Education in India". In his talk, he gave a brief account of the various movements which were started for the promotion of women's education in India and spoke in detail about the S.N.D.T. University. A small collection was made for the University after his talk.

Professor Karve spent an enjoyable week at Sandown where about 125 Indians—men, women and children—belonging to different communities and creeds met at a conference.

Mr. Pollock and other friends arranged meetings to enable Professor Karve to establish contacts in London. One of these meetings was held under the auspices of the East Indian Association in the Caxton Hall. Lady Simon who had visited the S.N.D.T. University during her visit to India was in the chair. Professor Karve read a paper on "Education of Women in India". After the reading of the Paper there was a lively

discussion in which Englishmen as well as Indians participated.

Professor Divekar organized a collection in Paris with the help of some Indian pearl merchants whom he knew. A party was arranged at which Professor Karve and a few others spoke. The response to the appeal Professor Karve made for funds was very encouraging.

The conference in Geneva was held from July 25 to August 4. About 1,500 delegates from different parts of the world attended it. Besides lectures and discussions on topics of general interest, there were sectional meetings. Professor Karve spoke on "The Indian Experiment in Higher Education for Women". The Indian delegation organized a meeting of delegates from Asian countries. At this meeting it was resolved to hold an Asian regional conference on education in India.

Shortly after the Geneva Conference, Professor Karve went to Elsinore to attend another international meeting of educationists which was held from August 4 to August 21. It was organised by the New Education Fellowship and was attended by nearly 2,000 delegates from all over the world. They discussed the various modern experiments which were being tried to give the child opportunities for self-education. Professor Karve was struck with the work of the Conference particularly as it was organised mostly by women. The deliberations of the Elsinore Conference were presided over by Mrs. Beatrice Ensor, a woman of great ability.

At the Geneva Conference, Professor Karve met Mr. R.V. Gogate, an Indian educationist who had come from New York to attend the Conference. Mr. Gogate undertook to make arrangements for Professor Karve's American tour. During his stay in New York Professor Karve stayed at the International House which accommodated five to six hundred students from almost all the nations of the world. He had an

enthusiastic reception from the Indian residents in New York who presented him with a purse of four hundred dollars.

Wherever he went, he found the people very eager to hear about India. He delivered lectures at many places and the subject of his lectures was either women's education or social reform in India.

After completing his American tour, Professor Karve went to Japan where he was particularly interested in visiting the Women's University at Tokyo. Dr. Aso, friend and colleague of Mr. Naruse, the founder of the University, received Professor Karve and the other members of the party with great kindness. It gave Professor Karve particular delight to see that although the University had suffered a great loss as a result of the earthquake of 1923, its activities continued unhampered. The work was carried on in temporary huts while permanent buildings were being erected again.

After his tour of thirteen months, Professor Karve returned to India in April 1930. He was able to collect Rs. 27,000 for the University, while the total expenses of the tour came to Rs. 12,700 only. He was glad that his world tour was not a financial burden on the University. About the tour, Professor Karve wrote in *Looking Back*, his autobiography in English :

"I think that our tour round the world was, on the whole, fairly successful. First, I was able to maintain excellent health and not a single engagement was missed. In America, for want of time, we often travelled at night and I did not mind changing trains when necessary even in the bitter cold at midnight. Secondly, we were able to meet a good many prominent people all over the world, and with several of them we could spend hours exchanging views about social and political questions. Thirdly, we could dispel a good deal of misunderstanding caused by recent books on India. Very often the questions after many of my lectures referred to the untruthful or exaggerated

statements about social customs in India. Fourthly, there was no financial loss, although perhaps, the addition to the University funds was somewhat less than what it would have been, if I had worked in India. Lastly, it is no small matter that the Indian Women's University came to be known all over the world. At each place I visited, publicity was given to the work of the University through special articles and reports of my lectures in local papers. At any rate this tour which was a leap in the dark and about which I had great misgivings brought me back full of hope and vigour to carry on my work."

Among the delegates who attended the international conference on education at Geneva, there was one who had met Professor Karve before. Professor Fredrick J. Gould had spent a few weeks in India in 1913 and had visited the Fergusson College. When Professor Gould met Professor Karve in Geneva, they "plunged into fraternal converse straightaway", as he wrote in the Preface to Professor Karve's autobiography in English. Professor Gould learnt that Professor Karve had sat among his Poona audience when he gave an ethical story lesson to a class of boys in the Poona High School. After referring to Professor Karve's memorable journey to Satara for the Public Examination in 1875, and to his bold effort in founding the Women's University in 1916, Professor Gould wrote in that preface:

"Then follows the splendid record—to me as enchanting as the chronicle of Marco Polo—of our pioneer's passage round the globe by the route of London, Dublin, Geneva, Elsinore, by the Baltic Sea, United States and Tokyo."

Even before he got over the fatigue of the strenuous thirteen-month tour round the world, Professor Karve began to think of visiting that part of the world which was left out during his first tour—Africa. His eldest son Shankar had made

Mombasa in East Africa his home and was one of the prominent medical practitioners of Kenya Colony. As soon as the idea occurred to his mind, he wrote to his son. Shankar, in his" reply, could not hold out high hopes of success but he said that the visit would not be altogether fruitless and that a fairly good collection could be made in East Africa for the 'Women's University. Professor Karve lost no time in obtaining the sanction of the Syndicate of the University. He left Bombay for Mombasa on December 31, 1930. Baya went with him this time. Her main purpose was to meet her son, her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. She paid for her passage from her own savings. Professor Karve visited different towns in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Portuguese East Africa. He spent about six weeks in South Africa. There was an encouraging response to his appeal for funds. The total collections made in Africa amounted to Rs. 34,000. The expenses of the tour were a little over Rs. 2,000. After an absence of nearly fifteen months, Professor Karve and his wife returned to India on March 12, 1932.

To the S.N.D.T. Women's University, Sir Vithaldas Thaekersey's early death in 1922 had been a great blow. Ever since he began to take interest in the work of the University, Sir Vithaldas not only gave it a princely donation, but devoted a good deal of his time and energy to see that its work was properly planned and carried out. The University was deprived of his fatherly care. To Professor Karve it was a personal loss. He looked in vain for another supporter and well-wisher as kind and as generous as Sir Vithaldas. After his death the executors of his estate continued to pay the annual interest on the amount donated by him and the University annually received Rs. 52,500 from them. It was a matter of satisfaction that Lady Premlila Thackersey, after the death of her husband, had begun to take interest in the affairs of the University. She was elected to the Syndicate in 1926.

In February 1932, unfortunately, differences arose between the Trustees of Sir Vithaldas Thaekersey Trust and the University authorities regarding the fulfilment of certain conditions. The grant was paid in monthly instalments. The amount for the month of February was received as usual, but soon afterwards a letter signed by the three executors was received by the Registrar of the University. The letter was dated February 25, 1932. It contained intimation about the decision of the executors to discontinue the annual grant of Rs. 52,500.

In the letter it was stated :

“We regret to have to send you this communication with reference to the donation which the late Sir Vithaldas had offered to make on certain conditions well known to you and contained in the documents in your possession.

“Since the death of Sir Vitbaldas we continued to pay Rs. 52,500 every year in the hope and belief that the conditions would be fulfilled. We have now waited for over ten years and find that the conditions of the donation have not been fulfilled or carried out. For some time past we have felt that the University has failed to carry out or fulfil these conditions and that every sufficient opportunity has been given them to enable them to do so.

“Under the circumstances we have now decided that the conditions: not having been fulfilled it is our duty to stop the annual grant which was hitherto being paid by monthly instalments and we hereby notify to you that no payment will be made in future by us.”

Professor Karve was in East Africa when the Registrar received this letter. He was informed about it immediately on his landing in Bombay on March 12. The news almost stunned him but he did not lose courage. He must face the ordeal as it came. He regarded it as a test for himself and for his colleagues.

It was immediately necessary to fill the gap of Rs. 52,500 in the annual receipts of the University and to make a provision for this amount in the annual expenditure of Rs. 70,000.

At this dark hour of trial, Professor Karve's first thought was to consult his closest associates, the life-workers of the Hindu Widows' Home Association. Had it been an ordinary matter of an administrative or an academic nature, it could have been taken up and disposed off by the Senate or the Syndicate of the University. From the very start, Professor Karve had assumed the moral responsibility for the financial stability of the University. He now felt that it was more for him than for the Senate to meet the situation. He prepared himself to meet it with a brave heart.

His colleagues did not fail him. They rose to a man and offered to do whatever he would ask of them. They all resolved to accept a cut in their monthly salaries. Out of a monthly salary of Rs. 125, each life-worker paid back Rs. 50. Other teachers in the College did not lag behind. They also offered to work on reduced salaries. After receiving the amount of their salary, they returned the whole amount to Professor Karve and asked him to give them the balance after retaining what was needed for the University. The amounts of grants given to affiliated institutions were reduced. All these measures of retrenchment and economy resulted in an annual saving of not more than Rs. 17,500 which was just one third of the total amount. A public appeal was made for special contributions.

The University Senate also took prompt action. Soon after the receipt of the letter from the executors of Sir Vithaldas' estate, Sir Chunilal Mehta who had been Chancellor for six years sent in his resignation. Mr. Justice S. S. Patkar who was Vice-Chancellor stood by the University in its dark hour of trial and gladly accepted the office relinquished by Sir Chunilal

Mehta. The Senate unanimously elected Mr. Patkar as Chancellor of the University.

The Senate approved of the proposal to draw from the permanent fund of the University which was built up during sixteen years, if funds from other sources were not available. An emergency budget was prepared with the Chancellor's approval and accepted by the Senate.

Professor Karve's reaction to the difficult situation is reflected in the following passage which is taken from his English autobiography :

“There is probably no unmixed evil or unmixed good in the world. Even calamities have their useful function. The earnestness of the workers and the real usefulness of the movement are tested. It would have been natural for the people to entertain doubts about the stability of the University under such a calamity and the natural consequences would have been the falling off in numbers in the schools and colleges. The numbers of the candidates appearing for the different examinations were also expected to be affected but nothing of the sort took place. On the contrary these numbers increased even when the fees had to be enhanced.”

Efforts to arrive at an understanding with the executors of Sir Vithaldas estate proved unsuccessful. It was therefore decided to file a suit against the executors of the will of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey under Section 92 of the Civil Procedure Code on the Original Side of the Bombay High Court.

The suit was filed by the Advocate General but it did not come up for hearing for two and a half years.

Nearly three years had passed and still there was no sign of improvement in the situation. In December 1934, Professor Karve called a special meeting of the life-workers of the Hindu Widows'

Home Association. The meeting was held under the heavy cloud of uncertainty and anxiety. Almost all of the seventeen life-workers of the Association—men and women—were willing to do their utmost. They resolved to adopt such measures as would be necessary in case the difficulties continued for a period of ten years. It was resolved to accept a further voluntary cut in their salaries. This decision of the life-workers had a great moral effect on the efforts which were being made for coneceting funds from the public.

On the advice of Mr. S. S. Patkar, Chancellor of the University, who was also an eminent lawyer, an independent suit was filed after consulting the Advocate General. An application for the appointment of a receiver for the estate of Sir Vithaldas Thaekersey was also filed and it came up for hearing on April 9, 1935. Mr. Justice Rangnekar who heard the application advised the parties to come to a compromise, and offered himself to arbitrate. There were three sittings for the hearing and they were held in Justice Rangnekar's chamber. At the last sitting the Judge was requested to withhold his arbitration award until another effort was made to arrive at a compromise. As a result of prolonged discussions, the terms of the consent decree agreed upon by both sides were presented to the Court. With the acceptance of these terms, the dispute between the University and the executors of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey's will came to an end on April 17. 1935.

It was agreed that the annual grant of Rs. 52,500 being the interest on the amount donated by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey should be paid permanently in quarterly instalments. The University agreed to fulfil the conditions which included the raising of a permanent fund which would bring an annual income of Rs. 52,500 and the transfer of the University and its offices to Bombay.

The University and its administration were separate from the Hindu Widows' Home Association. The University came into being in 1916 as an independent organisation, but between the University and the older institution, the Anath Balikashram of Hingne, there were ties which had become stronger with the passage of years. Professor Karve who founded the Ashram was also the founder of the University. All the life-workers of the Ashram regarded the progress of the University as a moral responsibility on themselves and therefore worked for it whole-heartedly. Ten of them had been working in the University as professors or lecturers. One of the best among them had taken up and was carrying out with distinction and selfless zeal the duties of the Registrar of the University. Everyone of them regarded the work of the University as an extension of the work of the Ashram. In accordance with one of the conditions laid down by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, the University and its offices were transferred to Bombay in 1935 and thereafter the ties between the Hingne Institution and the University slackened.

## A New Activity

The University was now placed on a smooth path. Professor Karve was confident that it no longer required his personal care and labours, and he watched the efforts and labours of those who had come forward to undertake the task of expanding the work of the University. There was no voice of discord or criticism regarding the usefulness of the University. His faith in his own ideas about the University remained unshaken and it was strengthened further by the satisfaction with which he looked back on its achievements of the past twenty years, modest though they were. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him that Lady Premlila Thackersey was taking great interest in the affairs of the University and even taking a lead in several important matters.

With a mind at peace the old man was now able to think of his family-his wife, his sons and daughters-in-law and his grandchildren.

He was happy to see that all his sons were doing well.

The eldest of them, Raghunath, had obtained the *Diplome d'Etudes Supérieures* in Mathematics at the University of Paris. After serving for a few years as lecturer in Mathematics in the Elphinstone College, he joined the Wilson College, Bombay. For some years he had been devoting his attention to the problem of birth-control and similar other questions. Professor Karve did not agree with many of his son's views and did not approve of some of his activities. But he admired

the courage and selfless zeal with which Professor R. D. Karve devoted himself to the work he had chosen.

His second son, Shankar, who had become a doctor, had settled in Mombasa in East Africa. During his visit to Africa, Professor Karve was pleased to see that his son was not only doing good work as a medical practitioner, but was also taking part in social and political activities as a Municipal Councillor and as the General Secretary of the East African Indian Congress.

Professor Karve was particularly glad that his third and fourth sons, Dinkar and Bhaskar, had joined the institutions in which he had worked and which he regarded as the pride of Poona—the New English School and the Fergusson College. Dinkar who was a Ph.D. of the Leipzig University, had joined the Deccan Education Society as a life-member. Bhaskar took up the work of the other institution founded by Professor Karve at Hingne. Professor Dinkar D. Karve's wife, Irawati, also joined the Hingne Institution as a life-worker and served as the Registrar of the Women's University. Kaveri, Bhaskar's wife, was a teacher in one of the schools at Hingne.

While Professor Karve himself was devoting his time and energies to the institutions which he had founded, his wife, Baya, was doing valuable work in giving shelter to orphans in her own home and bringing them up. The tender care she bestowed on them became the wonder of those who lived in the neighbourhood.

When her youngest son, Bhaskar, completed his University education and took the degree in science, Baya felt that there was nothing more for her to do for her sons. She could not sit idle at home. She still had 'my own children' as she loved to call the orphans, to look after but they did not take up all her time. She, therefore, thought of taking up some

work to help the institutions started by her husband. She first took up the sale of the copies of the second edition of Professor Karve's autobiography the publication of which had been undertaken by the Ashram. She resolved to collect the amount which the Ashram had still to repay on account of the expenses over the publication of the book. While Professor Karve was abroad on his travels in Europe and America, Baya visited the cities in North India, all alone, and sold a large number of copies. When she returned from her tour, she felt happy and proud that she had been able to do good work for the Ashram and also spend the time profitably in reviving old friendships and making new ones in the different cities and towns she visited.

For a time, after the settlement of the dispute between the University and the trustees of the Thackersey Estate, Professor Karve felt that he would spend the remaining years of his life in the company of his dear ones, surrounded by his grandchildren. He looked forward to the dedication of those years to the inward pursuits of the mind which was now free from all attachments. He was now entitled to the peace and contentment which came to a man who had accomplished his life's mission. But before the year had reached its end, thoughts about a new activity entered his mind. As he looked back during those calm moments on the events that had gone by since he conceived the idea of founding the Anath Balikashram forty years before, he was amused to find that in his life there had been cycles of ten years and at the end of each, a new idea, a new outlook and a new and powerful urge to take up a new activity took possession of his mind. As he observes in his *Looking Back*:

“When I was eighteen, I began to learn the English alphabet and new vista of life was opened before my eyes. At twenty-eight, I took up the Murud Fund which became a very

important side-activity of mine for several years. The Golden Jubilee of that Fund will be celebrated in October 1936. Ten years later, the Hindu Widows' Home Association was established and I am happy to see that it has been rendering very useful service to the society. When I was forty-eight, the ideas of the Mahila Vidyalaya and the Nishkam Karma Math took possession of me and I enthusiastically took up corresponding activities. These institutions after several years successful work were merged into the Hindu Widows' Home Association. It was at the age of fifty-eight that I took a leap in the dark to found the Women's University."

Fortunately, as he went on to say, no new idea emerged at the age of sixty-eight, and his undivided attention was given to the University for ten more years. At seventy-eight, however, he began to think of a new activity; it was a scheme for the spread of education among villagers. Probably, in 1935, he was able to see that the cause of women's education was making rapid strides on the path of progress. It was enthusiastically taken up by private bodies as well as by Government. Schools for girls were founded in every district and in all big towns and even in many of the smaller ones. Many boys' schools began to admit girls. Professor Karve now began to feel that he should take up the cause of the removal of illiteracy and the spread of elementary education among the villagers. District Local Boards and a few private bodies were conducting primary schools in many villages, but there were still many more in which there were no schools and the benefits of education were unknown.

The idea soon possessed him completely. He wrote an article in the *Kesari* in which he gave an outline of the scheme. Soon afterwards, the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society was established. The object of the Society was to start

schools of the old indigenous type to teach the three R's in villages in which there were no schools run by the District Local Boards. In these schools it was proposed to make a special effort to keep up the reading habits of adults who knew how to read and write. For this purpose every school was to have a small library attached to it. Professor Karve set the ball rolling by placing himself in charge of a school and by paying fifteen rupees from his monthly pension of seventy rupees for the expenses of the school.

Professor Karve took up the work with religious devotion. He was not in the habit of writing a diary, but began writing it on New Year's Day in 1936. On the first day he wrote:

"I have never written a diary before. While I was abroad visiting foreign countries, I had made an attempt to keep a daily journal, but could not do it satisfactorily. From today, however, I propose to write a diary regularly. My only purpose in writing it will be to keep a record of the new venture I have undertaken. It is an humble effort to start schools in those villages in Maharashtra in which no schools exist. I propose to devote at least ten minutes every day to this work. If I do not, I should deem it disgraceful of me to have neglected the work. It is for this reason that I have decided to write a diary from today."

It was his usual habit to judge himself and his efforts with severity and relentlessly. Professor Karve kept the diary regularly for some time. It was, however, hardly necessary for him to maintain it as a corrective or as a reminder to himself. Throughout the crowded years of his life, he had loved and cared for nothing as he had loved and cared for work. It was a hard life that he had chosen, and he had lived it well. He could not have looked back without satisfaction upon the years that had rolled by since he took up the work of the Murud

Fund. When he wrote the first page of his diary, he had stray scruples in him, and he sometimes judged himself unjustly. The only person in the world to whom he could be unkind was himself.

It is true, however, that for a man of his age, it was a stupendous task. He was aware that private efforts to spread literacy in the villages were insignificant, even like a single drop of water in an ocean. Still, he took up the work for he believed that his humble efforts and those of his colleagues would be an indication of the awakening among the people in the matter of the spread of education. In less than a year, he was able to collect Rs. 2,700 for the work, and two school had been started. In these efforts, he had the valued and able co-operation of Mr. R. S. Bapat, a retired engineer, who had been doing useful work in the Khed and Shiwapur talukas for the uplift of the villagers.

The work steadily grew. Mr. R. B. Bhagwat who had spent many years as a teacher and was headmaster of the Nasik High School joined Karve when he retired. In ten years the number of schools conducted by the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society was forty. The work of the Society went on till 1950. When Government formulated a scheme for giving grant-in-aid to voluntary schools in villages, it became unnecessary for the Society to continue its activities.

The workers and students of the Ashram at Hingne, with the help of the old students, planned to celebrate the 31st birthday of Professor Karve, which was to fall on April 18, 1938, as an occasion for thanksgiving. Early in 1937, they prepared a plan and worked out the details. The life-workers started the 'Karve Felicitation Fund' and everyone came forward with a contribution of his or her half-month's salary to the Fund. A representative committee with Mr. Grieve,

Director of Public Instruction, as Chairman, was formed to organise a joint display of sports and other physical activities of all girls' high schools in Poona. Mrs. Saralabai Khat, an old student of the Ashram, and her husband Dr. G. K. Khot, gave a donation for commemorating the occasion by constructing a swimming pool at Hingne.

Celebrations were held all over the country on April 18, 1938. For Professor Karve himself the day was not different from any other; it was only another day on which he felt contented and thankful that he had been able to do something useful. However, even when he had become eighty years old, he had not ceased to have a yearning to do something more. It always seemed to him that he had not done enough. For every day that dawned, on every eighteenth of April, he felt thankful that he had a new day for doing some more good.

Professor Karve had spent some years of his youth in Bombay as a teacher. He taught in schools and gave private tuitions to students. For more than twenty years, he had served in the Fergusson College as a professor and had taught mathematics to hundreds of students. However, the real and more abiding teaching he had done was at Hingne although he never did any systematic teaching in any of the institutions founded by him. But all the inmates and workers of the Ashram, the Vidyalaya, the Pathashala and the Adhyapika Shala had the incomparable advantage of learning from one who lived near them. Every word he uttered, every little action of his, was an education for them. When they gathered together to offer their homage on his eighty-first birthday, the idea uppermost in their minds was that they were in the presence of a teacher who was exemplary not only in the qualities of a teacher but in his capacity to do good to everybody and at all times.

## After Ninety—Still Young

In 1942, the Banaras Hindu University conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters On Dhondo Keshav Karve. By having his name enshrined in its records, the Banaras Hindu University honoured itself.

The world now admired the man who had accomplished in his life all that a single man was capable of accomplishing—more than most could. But in his own eyes, what he had been able to do was negligible, only a small portion of what he thought he should have done.

Forty years before, he had started the Balikashram. It was only a home for the widows. The Mahila Vidyalaya was an institution meant only for women—and mostly for those who belonged to Maharashtra. By founding the Women's University and particularly after he had received the donation from Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, his activities and aspirations had gone far beyond provincial boundaries. The University was an institution for the whole of India. Yes, it was, but it was meant only for those who wished to have higher education. The percentage of those who were able to complete their education in schools and go to the University was very small. The vast majority of India's population did not even know how to read and write. Would he be content with doing something, whatever its worth and the success he had attained in it, only for those who belonged to the so-called middle classes? Were the illiterate farmers and laborers also not his brethren? He heard their mute call. Unless he did some-thing

for them, he felt, his mission in life would remain unfulfilled. Out of these restless thoughts was born the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society. For more than twelve years, he worked for the Society. In January 1948, he wrote:

‘The Society offered financial help to any person who came forward to conduct a school in a place where there was no school. Today, there are forty such schools and their work is supervised by the Society. I have been going round every morning for two hours to collect funds for the Society. Generally I take one volunteer with me when I go round. I accept any donation, however small, even an anna or two pice. When the Congress accepted office, all these schools began to get grant-in-aid from Government. The Society today has a balance of sixteen or seventeen thousand rupees.’

It was almost entirely due to Professor Karve’s efforts that the Maharashtra Village Primary Education Society was able to expand its activities so rapidly and even after giving financial help to all the forty schools, it had a balance of more than sixteen thousand rupees.

The world was wider than Maharashtra or even India, and it was not enough to strive to give equality of status and opportunity to women who form only one-half of the human race. Professor Karve had always been conscious of the inequalities which existed also among men and communities. It was inhuman, he felt, to allow these inequalities to exist. He was aware of the work that was undertaken and was being carried on for the removal of the curse of untouchability from Hindu society. This work could be extended to wider spheres. Particularly during the war, Professor Karve felt the need for making an organised effort to restore among the people confidence, which had been shaken almost to its roots by the war, in a life of peace and of co-operative effort. As he heard

about the horrors of the war and pondered over them, the urge to do something became irresistible.

He had heard a good deal of the World Fellowship which was started in 1918 by Mr. Charles Frederick Weller in the United States. The object of this organisation was to establish a world government for the common welfare of all the people of the world. The idea of world government had a great appeal for him. He wrote to the founder of the World Fellowship and had a reply. He continued to write to him to obtain reports of the Fellowship's work from time to time.

In 1934, the Society to Promote Human Equality was founded in London. One of the promoters of this organisation was Frederick J. Gould whom Professor Karve had met during his visit to India in 1913. Mr. Gould had come to India at the invitation of the Education Department of Bombay to give demonstration in moral training to school children. Professor Karve met Mr. Gould again in Geneva at the World Education Conference. From Mr. Gould he obtained the literature of the Society of which he was one of the founders. He joined the Society as a member by paying a membership fee of five shillings. The Society brought out a magazine. Professor Karve read very carefully the writings which appeared in the magazine. They revealed to him for the first time the idea that human equality was not only an ideal to be preached from the platform or the pulpit, but one which could be made practicable in social and political life.

Professor Karve had before his eyes the shining and unparalleled example of Gandhiji's efforts in the field. He had great admiration for Gandhiji and particularly for his programme of reform of society in which the pride of place was given to equal status for the Harijans and for women. Professor Karve had gone on a world tour and was in Japan in

1930, when Gandhiji began his Dandi March and inaugurated the Salt Satyagraha.

When these stirring events were taking place Professor Karve returned from Japan and witnessed a phenomenon which brought tears of joy to his eyes. He saw that hundreds of women, high and low, old and young, were marching towards the sea through the crowded streets of Bombay. They were all cordoned off by constables with *lathis*, and armed white sergeants. Fearlessly, with heroic songs on their lips, phalanx after phalanx of saffron-clad women were advancing in an orderly manner to reach the sea and break the salt law. Professor Karve exclaimed: "What decades of my work and work similar to mine have failed to achieve the wizard of Sabarmati has achieved by a single stroke of imaginative action."<sup>1</sup>

As he earnestly pondered over the objects of the Society to Promote Human Equality, it became manifest to him that in India where political emancipation had almost completely occupied the minds and energies of the people, very little was being done to spread the ideas of equality among the different communities of the -Hindus, and also between the Hindus and the Muslims and the followers of the other religions. The political leaders were doing all that was needed to give India back her political freedom. Political freedom by itself was not enough to build up the Indian nation. It was necessary for the people to be more conscious of their social and spiritual obligations to one another. It was necessary to have a change of heart which could be brought about only by accepting that ideal of human equality and practising it. All these thoughts crossed Professor Karve's mind frequently, and as he thought, he felt that there should be in India an organisation of the

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1. *Gandhi and Uplift of Women*, R.R. Diwakar in 'Gandhi Marg' August 1964

type of the Society founded by Mr. Gould and his friends in London. He decided to found it himself. In an article which he contributed to the *Indian Review* of Madras in 1942, he gave an outline of his scheme. He concluded the article with the following words :

“If my physical and mental strength continues to remain as it is today, I propose to make a humble beginning for Maharashtra after the war is over.”

He stated that he would start the society for Maharashtra only because he felt that it was beyond him to make an effort on an all-India level.

A year passed by and still the war went on. He was eighty-five now. He grew impatient on account of his growing age. If he waited for the war to come to an end, his health might begin to fail and it would no longer be possible for him to take up the activity. He, therefore, decided to make a beginning immediately. Mrs. Varubai Shevade, a life-worker of the Ashram, had just retired and was free to undertake some new activity. She was glad to be able to give her assistance to Anna in his new venture. On January 1, 1944, Professor Karve and Mrs. Shevade issued a statement in which they gave an outline of the Samata Sangh (Society for the Promotion of Equality) which it was proposed to start. They invited people to join the Sangh by paying a membership fee of a rupee per year. They went from door to door collecting signatures of those who sympathised with the object of the new organisation. A hundred signatures were collected in about three months. The Samata Sangh was then formally inaugurated on April 21, 1944, at a meeting held at the Gaikwad Wada under the chairmanship of Mr. N. C. Kelkar. Among those who joined the Sangh, there were persons who belonged to different shades of opinion. They joined it because

they knew that the objects of the Sangh were above party considerations, and also because its promoter was too great to belong to any party and commanded universal respect. By his outlook, work and achievements, the founder of the Samata Sangh was most worthy of starting an activity which aimed at removing all differences and distinctions and promoting the common welfare of all men and women.

During the next two years the number of members of the Sangh reached six hundred. Professor Karve carried on correspondence with people in different parts of India to give publicity to the aims and objects of the Sangh. In November 1945, he found a valuable colleague in Rao Bahadur Sare of Bombay who founded a branch of the Sangh for Bombay and the Suburbs. Mrs. Durgabai Joshi, the well-known political worker of Mahavidarbha, soon followed by starting a branch there.

With an enthusiasm which put to shame many a younger worker, Professor Karve went from place to place to preach the gospel of equality. In January 1947 he went to Sangli where he was invited to participate in the *suvarna-tula*<sup>1</sup> celebrations of Mr. Vishnu Ramchandra Velankar, a prominent industrialist of the place. After the celebrations were over, Professor Karve stayed in Sangli a day longer and addressed the professors and students of the Willingdon College on the aims and objects of the Samata Sangh. From Sangli he went to Miraj where a public meeting was held in his honour. Later he visited Budhgaon, Kirloskarwadi and Oglewadi. In March he visited Kolhapur where he was invited to lay the foundation-stone of the Mahila Seva Mandal building. He took the advantage of his participation in the function to tell the members of the Mandal about the Samata Sangh and its aims. The residents

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1. *suvarna tula* : weighing against gold.

of Kolhapur organised a special function in his honour on the last day and collected a sum of two hundred rupees for his new activity.

Speaking as the President of the ninety-ninth anniversary celebrations of the Nagar Vachan Mandir of Poona, on May 4, 1947, Professor Karve said :

“If we are really anxious to avoid calamities like the last World War, the most effective thing to do is to establish a common central government for the whole world”.

Among those institutions which were making efforts to make the ideal of a world government possible, Professor Karve told the audience, was the Samata Sangh which he had started.

In order to carry on the work of making known -the objects of the Sangh more speedily and effectively, he started in July 1947 a monthly bulletin with the name *Manavi Samata*.

Murud, his home town, invited him to participate in the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Murud Fund. This Fund was founded by a band of young workers sixty years earlier with Professor Karve as their leader. The Bhagini Samaj of Murud held a meeting in the Durgadevi temple with which the name of the Karves of Murud has been intimately associated. Before he returned to Poona, the grand old man of Murud went to Murdi, the home town of Dr. Paranjpye, to preside over the prize giving of the local school. He did not forget to visit the taluka town of Dapoli where he addressed a well-attended meeting in the Tilak Smarak Mandir.

In a moving appeal which he issued in 1948, Professor Karve said:

“I do not ask for much. The annual subscription of the Samata Sangh is rupee one and eight annas only. This small amount includes the subscription of the monthly bulletin

*Manavi Samata.* The demands on a member of the Sangh are by no means excessive. They are very modest. We do not lay down a time-limit for the total acceptance and practice of the teachings of *samata*. Those who adopt it as an ideal and try to practise it as far as they can are accepted as members of the Sangh.”

On April 18, 1948, Dr. Karve completed ninety years of his age. The ninety-first birthday was celebrated all over India by his countrymen and countrywomen who felt thankful that he was still with them and was actively working for the cause he had undertaken. Dr. Rajendra Prasad presided over the function which was held in Bombay to celebrate his birthday. A purse of over a lakh of rupees was presented to him on the occasion. Two years before this, he had participated in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Anath Balikashram. Looking back on the fifty crowded years of that favourite child of his, Professor Karve felt thankful that his efforts had not been in vain. He felt at the same time that the work he had done was very little in comparison with the work that still lay ahead.

The Society for the Removal of Caste Distinctions (Jati Nirmulan Sanstha) was inaugurated in Poona in October 1948. At the preliminary meeting which was held on October 10, the chairman, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, said:

“Mr. Godbole, at whose invitation we have met here, has derived his inspiration from Shri Annasaheb Karve from whom I also have learnt the first lessons of public service.”

The Society founded by Mr. Godbole was one of the many instances of what Professor Karve was accomplishing by preaching the gospel of equality under the auspices of the Samata Sangh and through the pages of the *Manavi Samata*. During the months and years which followed, the work of the Samata Sangh found wider scope in the activities of institutions like the Jati Nirmulan Sanstha.

As Professor Karve was working for the Samata Sangh with youthful vigour, his wife was withdrawing herself from the entanglements of life. She lived alone at Yerandavane in a small cottage in the compound of the College. Her sons and daughters-in-law used to tell her :

“Baya, why don’t you come and stay with us? You are too old now to live alone.”

She could stay with Dinkar at Yerandavane or with Bhaskar at Hingne. Baya resolutely declined their invitations.

“In my own house, I ruled like a queen. Your homes are your kingdoms. You say you’ll do anything to make me happy. I know you will, but can’t you see there’s a difference between your kingdom and mine? How can I reign in a realm which is yours by right? So long as there is strength in my limbs, I shall not be dependent on anyone. If and when I lose my strength, I shall have to come to either of you for shelter and support.”

Long before Professor Karve took up the cause of human equality, his wife, Baya, had dedicated herself to the service of suffering and forsaken humanity. She was one of the very few persons who had the eye to see the wealth of the land in the poor, uncared-for, dirty, starved, wandering children. She became a mother to them. For forty years she toiled and suffered for them. With the tears of her eyes she washed the dirt from their bodies; with the blood of her heart she nursed their wounds.

Baya knew her end was drawing near. Diwali came with her lights but there was no joy or enthusiasm in the Ashram. Life was fading from Baya’s physical frame. Anna came every morning and sat by her bedside. Neither spoke but there was silent communion between the two hearts that had been bound together for fifty-seven years On the night of Tuesday,

November 29, 1950, began the last race between life and death. For some time, the body refused to yield. Towards evening it gave up. Anna had come from Yerandavane and had stayed on. He watched the face of his dying wife as life was slowly passing out. When someone suggested that he should go to bed, he rose and after a last, lingering look, quietly left the room.

The silent hours of the night were not disturbed by any sound. The silence with which the woman of eighty-six was preparing to leave revealed the strength of her spirit and even of her frail body which, as it lay huddled there, looked no bigger than that of a child.

Baya's last desire was fulfilled. She died with the red mark still adorning her forehead.

Anna stood motionless as the earthly remains were being consumed by fire. In the evening he returned to the place to have one last glimpse of the place where the last parting had taken place.

A *tulsi vrindavan*<sup>1</sup> now stands on the spot where Baya was cremated. It is now a place of pilgrimage to all. Anna visited it whenever he went to Hingne. There he remembered the companionship of fifty-seven years, but there was no sorrow on his face or in his heart.

Three years later, Professor Karve received with the same calmness the news which came from Bombay of the death of his eldest son. Professor R. D. Karve died after a short illness, on October 14, 1953. He was seventy-two years old at the time. As he lay on his deathbed in a hospital, his brothers were cautiously preparing their father's mind for what was coming on. A little before sunrise on the 14th, news came by a long distance call from Bombay. The message was sent by Dinkar who was at the bedside of his brother when the end

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1. *tulsi vrindavan* : decorative earthen vessel with the plant of holy basi

came. Bhaskar broke the news to his father. Professor Karve received it without a sigh. There was silence for a few seconds. It was broken by Professor Karve himself.

“Here I am, an old man of ninety-five!” he said, “It was my time to quit. Instead, the call came for my son! He too was old, but .....

Thirty-eight years after he was elected to preside over the annual session of the Indian National Social Conference in Bombay, Professor Karve was requested to inaugurate the Maharashtra Social Conference in Poona. The Conference was convened by a number of social reform organisations including the Jati Nirmulan Sanstha of Poona and the Bombay Presidency Social Reform Association of Bombay. The inauguration took place on April 18, 1953, the ninety-sixth birthday of Professor Karve. His inaugural address was a brief one. He spoke for about ten minutes in a clear voice which reached the remotest corner of the spacious amphi-theatre of the Fergusson College.

He exhorted the Conference to give an effective and bold lead not only to Maharashtra but to the whole country in removing social distinctions and in the establishment of social equality.

There was a touch of poignancy in the sentence with which he concluded the address. “I am an old man now, and I cannot say how many more sessions of this Conference I shall live to see.”

Nine years after distant Banaras honoured the grand old man of Poona with the honorary degree of D.Litt., Poona thought of conferring the honorary degree of D.Litt. on him. A third Doctorate (in Literature) came to him in 1955 from the S.N.D.T. Women’s University. ‘Then followed in quick succession other honours. The Government of India decorated

him with a Padma Vibhushan in 1955. In 1957, which was the hundredth year of his life, the University of Bombay entered the name of Dhondo Keshav Karve in its pages for the second time. In 1884, he had taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts from this university, and he had regarded the acquisition of that degree as something to be proud of. In 1957, the Syndicate and the Senate of the University of Bombay regarded it as a matter of the deepest satisfaction and pride that they were conferring another degree—the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws—on him. At the special convocation which was held on November 23, the Chancellor, Shri Sri Prakasa, said:

“We have reason to be grateful to Maharshi Karve for accepting the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from us. In attempting to honour him, we are truly honouring ourselves. In him we have a most distinguished *alumnus* of our own university, a most devoted public worker, a self-sacrificing patriot, a courageous champion of the humble and the distressed, an ideal person who has practised all that he has preached, and one who has, by the simplicity and purity of his own personal life, shown to us what a true representative of our ancient life and thought is and can be.”

Professor Karve was present at the convocation to receive the degree in person. There was a departure from the usual practice when he, as the recipient of the degree, made a brief speech to give expression to the particular sense of pride he felt in receiving the honour from his old university. He said:

“When I took my degree in 1884, I never dreamt that I would ever be classed with men like the late Dadabhai Naoroji or Sir C. V. Raman and receive a Doctorate of this university. Providence has been kind enough to give me a long life and a rich reward for the humble work I have done for the women of India. Today’s honour is one more proof of the love and

indulgence with which society has always treated me. During the remaining span of my restful life I will always remain grateful to my *Alma Mater* for the honour she has done me today. It is my sincere wish that this century-old university will rise to greater glory in producing sons of India worthy to shoulder the great tasks that lie ahead for us after independence.”

The three educational institutions of Bombay where Professor Karve was educated held a joint function to pay their homage to him and offer him their felicitations during his hundredth year. They were the Robert Money School, the Wilson College and the Elphinstone College. The meeting was held in the Elphinstone College Hall on November 24, a day after the special convocation of the University of Bombay. One of the most interesting items of the programme was the speech made by a boy from the Robert Money School, Prahlad Dabholkar, who said that he was proud to belong to a school of which a great man like Maharshi Karve was an old pupil. Dabholkar said:

“May I tell you why I have been asked to offer the felicitations of my School and these beautiful flowers on behalf of my School to Maharshi Karve? In him we are honouring a man who is completing a hundred years of his life, and I have just completed a hundred months of mine.”

Maharshi Karve was presented with a beautiful silver plate and an address on behalf of the three institutions. He made a brief reply in which he recalled the happy days of his school and college life.

“I am deeply grateful to you,” Maharshi Karve said, “for having organised this function and for having invited me to be present. The three institutions to which I belonged more than seven decades ago, the Robert Money School, the Wilson College and the Elphinstone College, have left their imprint

on my mind. I owe a debt of gratitude to them which it is difficult for me to express in words. Bombay in those days was so different from the modern crowded city of today that one is staggered by the comparison. As a young man from the very backward areas of Konkan, my mind and intellect were shaped by these three institutions where I was educated. Today, all those teachers, who influenced and shaped me are long dead and gone, but they all come back to my mind on this occasion. To you, their successors and to the students of today who, like me then, are standing at the threshold of life, I give my best wishes.

“It is not given to everybody to enjoy such a long life as me, and that also as a comparatively healthy person. I am further fortunate that the institutions with which I was connected as a pupil including the University of Bombay have honoured me within the last few days. I can only say that I am thankful for their best wishes and felicitations and wish great prosperity and fruitful activity to all of them. The future of our country, whose history from the first unsuccessful attempt to drive out the intruder to the celebration of the first decade of independence I have been privileged to see, is in the hands of the persons we turn out from our schools and colleges and universities, and I hope that the educational traditions of the city of Bombay will take their proper share in the onward march of our country. Once again, thank you.”

On the Republic Day in 1958, the list of social workers, public servant's and officers selected for recognition by the award of honours by the President of India, was headed by the name of Dhondo Keshav Karve on whom the President conferred the Bharat Ratna, the highest honour the country could offer. By official recognition, Maharshi Karve thereafter belonged to the highest rank of the distinguished sons and servants of India.

## The Centenary and the Closing Years

The unique event of the completion of a hundred years by Professor Karve and his 101st birthday on April 18, 1958 was celebrated with unprecedented rejoicing and universal thanksgiving. Months before, committees were formed in Poona, Bombay and other places to make elaborate preparations for the celebration of the centenary in a fitting manner. The main function was held in Bombay on April 18, and it was preceded by a number of functions which were held in Poona. The old girls of Hingne met in large numbers at Hingne, and they were among the first to usher in the birth centenary of their revered and beloved Anna with what became a family get-together on April 12. One of them, Dr. Indirabai Niyogi (who during her stay at the Hingne Ashram was Mrs. Yamunabai Sane) presided over the gathering. The function organised by the workers and students of the Hingne Stree Shikshan Sanstha was held on Sunday, April 13. Shri Sri Prakasa, Governor of Bombay, went to Poona to preside over the function which was attended by over three thousand persons who included men, women and children, the elite of Poona and a large number of guests from Bombay and other places.

The birth centenary function in Bombay was held on the spacious grounds of the Brabourne Stadium which were tastefully decorated and illuminated. On the dais sat the grand old man flanked by Shri Sri Prakasa who presided and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, who had specially

come to Bombay to participate in the function as the chief guest and to pay his tribute to Professor Karve.

"This is a memorable day, the like of which I have not seen before," said Jawaharlal Nehru, addressing the vast gathering. "I am told we have met here to offer our felicitations to this great son of India, but, I ask, who are we, who am I, to felicitate him? We are so unworthy, so small before him! I have therefore come not to felicitate him but to ask of him his blessings, ask him to give us the inspiration to acquire at least a portion of his devotion, his simplicity and the qualities which have made his lofty character."

After the speeches and the presentations, Professor Karve made a brief reply. As he began to speak, the air was filled with profound reverential silence. In a few chosen words, he thanked those who had organised the celebrations and those who were present. Most of the credit for the work which he had been able to do and for his accomplishments which had assumed a visible shape in the various institutions which he had founded and reared, he said, belonged to his colleagues who had worked with him with devotion and to his innumerable friends and patrons. He remembered Baya, his life's partner, and said with emotion choking his voice that had it not been for the wonderful way in which Baya had helped him and relieved him considerably of his responsibilities—not only those which he owed to his family but also those of his work and public life—it would not have been possible for him to do many of the things which he was able to do. He expressed his profound gratitude to Providence for granting him the unique favour of living to see his own 101st birthday.

During the week-long celebrations in Bombay, another notable centenary—centenary of the birth of another emancipator of Indian women, Pandita Ramabai—was

celebrated. Ramabai was only five days younger than Maharshi Karve and had died thirty-six years before, on April 5, 1922. Professor Karve attended the function held in Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall on April 23 which was presided over by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the then Health Minister of the Government of India. In the brief but touching tribute which he paid to Pandita Ramabai, Professor Karve acknowledged his debt of gratitude to the Pandita from whom he had drawn inspiration in his own early efforts. He also remembered that his second wife, Anandibai, whom he had married as a widow, was the first student and boarder of the Sharada Sadan which was founded by Ramabai, who had also taken an active and prominent part in bringing about the marriage and had the marriage reception held in her Sharada Sadan.

The birth centenary had a four-fold significance. It was a unique occasion because the hero was the first among the great sons of India of modern times to live to see his own 101st birthday celebrated; it marked the completion of a hundred years in a life a great portion of which was dedicated to the service of the neglected, the frail and, in many cases, the poor; it also enabled the hundreds and thousands of the centenarian's grateful countrymen to recall the various landmarks in the history of the emancipation of Hindu women with which his life was identified for more than half a century; and it commemorated the life and mission of a man who was the embodiment of the best in the ancient traditions of India. This four-fold significance was effective and vividly presented to the people by the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India which produced an excellent documentary film on the life of the centenarian. The same task was further accomplished by the English biography of Maharshi Karve which was published by the Maharshi Karve Birth Centenary Committee of Bombay.

In 1899, Professor Karve had assigned his life insurance policy of Rs. 5,000 to the Anath Balikashram. According to the rules of the insurance company, the amount was to be paid to the institution after his death. The Life Insurance Corporation of India, by a special resolution, decided to pay the amount to the Balikashram on the occasion of the birth centenary.

The Deccan Education Society of which Professor Karve was a life-member, had in its possession another insurance policy of Rs. 3,000 the amount of which was to have been paid to his survivors. The Society returned the policy to him on his 101st birthday, but he paid back the amount to the Deccan Education Society.

On May 7, he left for Murud, his ancestral town, where he had spent happy days of his childhood and where, in later life, he had to suffer ostracism, persecution and isolation on account of his marriage to a widow. On his way to Murud, he had to halt at various places like Wai, Dapoli, etc., where functions were held in his honour. His stay of three days at Murud was packed with public functions and personal invitations. The preparations had gone on for full twelve months and long before his arrival the town of Murud became a scene of great excitement and rejoicing, with those who belonged to the town coming back to it from distant places to participate in the various functions and particularly to have *darshan* of the grand old man of Murud whom they claimed as their own brother-citizen.

It was no easy task for Professor Karve or the members of his party to attend all the functions and respond to all the invitations. Those who were with him were anxious that he should be spared the effects of the strenuous time on his health and sometimes felt a little too tired themselves but Anna would not listen to them.

"No," he told them when they politely advised him to decline with thanks a certain invitation to tea or lunch because they feared it would be too much of a strain, "We should not disappoint our good friend; he is so kind and will feel sorry if we don't go."

He enjoyed every function with the excitement and delight of a child. He disappointed none. He attended every function and accepted every invitation. He returned to Poona to the pleasant surprise of his relatives without the least effect of fatigue or exertion of the crowded programme in Murud.

In his daily routine in Poona after the celebrations there was no change except for his morning walks which were substituted by a stroll in the garden. This change became necessary on account of the weak sight and also of general physical weakness. He lived at Yerandavane with his younger son, Dr. Dinkar D. Karve. Dinkar and his wife, Irawati, looked after the health and needs of the old man with filial devotion. There were two things he did not like to miss, listening to the radio and his reading. He did not have any fetish or fads about his meals. He had tea morning and evening, his lunch and dinner, which were simple, and slept well at night.

Although Anna loved company and readily accepted invitations to meetings or functions like weddings, house-warming ceremonies, etc., he could equally enjoy hours of solitude. Never did he utter a word of complaint about being bored by loneliness or having to pass his time by himself which he had to do frequently when Dinkar and Irawati went out for work.

Fourteen months after the birth centenary, in June 1959, Professor Karve developed trouble of the prostate gland. This was for the third time that he had to be removed to hospital. He had developed the trouble on two previous occasions at the age of 81 and 91 and had a miraculous recovery, escaping

operation. At the age of 101, there was considerable risk in having a surgical operation performed on him, but there seemed to be no alternative. After long discussions and consultations, the decision was taken and the operation was performed. It was successful beyond expectation. The hundred-and-one-year-old patient stood it very well indeed. The recovery was smooth although it was slow and it took five months to complete.

A few months before he fell ill, Maharshi Karve had to go to Hingne to live with his youngest son and daughter-in-law, Bhaskar and Kaveri, because Dr. D. D. Karve and his wife had accepted an invitation from the U.S.A. for a lecture tour. There was no full-time electric supply in Hingne at that time, and, therefore, Anna missed his daily broadcasting programmes. Now he began to devote all his leisure and waking hours to reading. Sometimes he became conscious of his failing eyesight. Both his eyes had cataract and were operated upon, but only one of them gave him service after the operations. If he was told not to overstrain the eye which still had sight, he would not listen, because, his ears having almost completely ceased to function, reading became the only means of communication with the world. Bhaskar and Kaveri became his eyes and ears during those closing years of his life which he spent under their loving care.

Now he became more and more introspective and his mind began to recall and recapitulate the happenings and events of his past life and also what he had heard and read about many things including the history of man and the evolution of the earth, and similar topics. Often he gave loud utterance to these recollections. It seemed as if he was delivering a speech. It was not a little amusing to those who heard him although, at night, when he began his recollections aloud, the minds of those who slept in the same room were sometimes filled with fear by the loud voice. Sometimes he

repeated a lesson in mathematics or the dictation which he must have given to a class many years ago. Reciting verses from Marathi or Sanskrit, which was his old favourite pastime, became louder than ever before.

In the midst of the varying stages of advancing age, Anna's heart retained its natural tenderness and love for sweetness and beauty. It now began to find delight in small things. The sight of a bird or a flower or even a tiny multi-coloured feather gave him a thrill of joy, and he would not disturb or spoil its delicate beauty by so much as a tender touch. "What a lovely thing!" He would say after raising a flower to his nose for its fragrance for a few seconds, "and how sweet! Now take this and keep it in water so that it would retain its freshness longer."

Sadhana, his eighteen-month-old great-grand-daughter, was his constant companion during the last six months of his life. She played with him, would take his hand in hers and lead him as he walked, give him a share of the sweets given to her and talked and listened to him. Often she whispered into his ears what was obviously meant only for them, without taking the least trouble to know whether her old great-grandpa could hear or understand what she wished to confide to him.

The last illness was a very brief and sudden one. His colleagues, students, disciples and friends and the workers of Hingne had planned the celebration of his 106th birthday which was to fall on April 18 in 1963 in an elaborate manner and with an ambitious programme. Death in the case of a man who had crossed the bar of four years and a hundred, was not altogether an unexpected happening, or one which could be called untimely, but in the case of Maharshi Karve who had successfully survived two or three illnesses during the last two or three years of his long life, when an illness of barely sixty hours carried him away, his departure gave a

sudden shock to his students and co-workers. They were least prepared for it at a time when all their thoughts and energies were engaged in planning the celebration of the 106th birthday.

The last illness began in the early hours of the morning of Wednesday, November 7, 1962 or late at night on the previous day. He complained of pain in the stomach. He responded favourably to the medicines and other treatment which Dr. Yashvantrao Phatak gave him on Wednesday and Thursday. A ray of hope was visible when at about 09:15 on Thursday night, he could have strength enough to turn from one side to another in the bed without help, but that proved illusory. At dawn, when the rest of the world was still sleeping or was preparing to welcome the rising sun as it appeared with its first glow on the eastern horizon, the grand old man of Hingne was preparing to take leave of his dear ones and of all his achievements that had surrounded him as he lay in the same cottage in which he had founded the Anath Balikashram sixty-six years before. "Let me turn to the other side." These were the last words he uttered an hour before his large and tender heart ceased to beat. "I have to go there."

A few months earlier, he had said to a companion who happened to be an old student, "I am a hundred and four now. The blessings which I had from my elders and the best wishes of my friends that I should live to be a hundred years old have been realised. May I now die in peace and happiness ,"

The peaceful look on the small face as it lay on the pillow covered with white hair more than suggested that he lead met his death in peace and with a cheerful heart as he had wished.

The news spread from the little cottage at Hingne to all corners of the country and the world. His eldest surviving son, Dr. S. D. Karve, in East Africa; Dinkar and Irawati in Mahabaleshwar; the President of India, and Prime Minister

Nehru in New Delhi; and everywhere, his admirers, friends and students in hundreds and thousands received it with unspeakable grief and in awful silence.

"It is said that Dr. Karve is no more," said Jawaharlal Nehru in his message, "and yet Dr. Karve's life and death at an advanced age is a story of triumph over great difficulties and of success. He has been a great man in every sense of the term and India is proud of him and his memory will endure."

The story of triumph over great difficulties and of success which Prime Minister Nehru spoke of, the story of a simple man who rose to greatness without being least aware of it, ends here, but the monument of dedicated service and of a simple life filled with labour of devotion which he left behind will endure.

## Epilogue

“Even if I get a pice each from the thirty-three crores of my countrymen, I shall be able to run my institutions without difficulty,” said Anna to a girl of about sixteen who had just returned from her campaign to make collections for the Bhaubeej Fund of the Ashram. The girl was boastfully telling her friends that she had refused to accept a donation of four annas which someone had offered her. When Anna heard of this, he sent for the girl and told her that she was wrong. He tried to impress upon her mind the fact that it was not the amount that mattered but the thought and the attitude which accompanied it.

Maharshi Karve would have liked to be called and treated as a *bhatji*—a priest who lives on charity. His life’s mission had made him a beggar in the cause of his institutions. For over sixty years he did the work of collecting funds for the Ashram, for the Vidyalaya, for the University, for the Village Education Scheme and for the Samata Sangh. In 1886, long before he thought of founding any institution, even before his second marriage, he had taken the lead in founding the Murud Fund. While he was working in the New English School he had started the Students’ Fund. His fund of energy for collecting funds was inexhaustible. In the worst of times his enthusiasm reached the greatest heights. For donations and contributions he did not depend on persons who had wealth. On one occasion when he had an unpleasant experience at the door of a wealthy gentleman, he asked Professor Mydeo who had gone with him, “Why did you bring me here? Have I not

told you that I don't wish to go to the door of a rich man?" He has acknowledged with pride in the reports of his institutions that they have been thriving mainly on the help he had received from those belonging to the middle classes.

When one of his institutions was suddenly deprived of a large sum which used to come annually, the Maharshi set out again with the alms-bowl in hand. He visited cities, towns and villages, but he met and appealed mainly to the common people and gratefully accepted whatever they gave out of the little they had. One of the places he visited was Vita in the South Satara district. The place is now known as Tilakpur. A meeting was held in the Nagar-Vachanalaya, the local library and reading-room. He did not make a long speech. After telling the audience about his institution and its difficulties, Maharshi Karve made an appeal for help. The audience was moved. No sooner did he sit down than those present came forward to offer donations. Some gave fifty rupees each, others gave twenty or ten each and there were many who could not give more than a rupee. As the list of donors was steadily swelling, one man rose from his seat and loudly announced his own donation of a pice. He then went up to the table at which the chairman and the distinguished guest were sitting. He placed the pice on the table and then returned to his seat. There was deep resentment at his action but Professor Karve himself had gratitude in his eyes as he looked at the man. No one, 'therefore, said anything. After the list was complete, Professor Karve rose once again to thank those who had responded to his appeal. As he spoke, he took the pice in his hand and once again looked at the donor gratefully. He had a special word of acknowledgment for his pice. He said:

"I do not estimate the worth of this help from its currency value. It has come from a sympathiser. Undoubtedly he has

been inspired by a desire to help what he thinks is a worthy cause. In such generous and kind acts, I find the acknowledgments by my friends and well-wishers of my humble work and from them I derive strength and courage for my future efforts.”

Great as had been Maharshi Karve’s life and his work, greater still was he himself. And that greatness may be summed up in one word and one concept—simplicity. His friends, colleagues and admirers found different rare qualities in the life that he lived and the work he accomplished. One of them found the secret of his successful life in “the Arjuna gleam in his Brahman eyes, the gleam that tells not of dreaminess which only dreams, but of the dream genius that frames a noble conception and proceeds to plan, with concentration and business capacity, schemes for the service of humanity .... “ According to Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, Anna’s life had been a great lesson in idealism, endless activity, and high sense of morality. Those who watched and studied the different stages of his life of public service proclaimed that in him there was a mind which never ceased to grow and extend the scope of its usefulness to ever-widening spheres. It is also true that even the most devoted of his disciples and colleagues sometimes failed to understand or appreciate his ways of thinking and acting. One of them was filled with jealousy when he saw Anna showing greater confidence in a few workers like Parvatibai, Nana Athavale, Seetabai Annigeri and Gangubai Tambole, and secretly accused him of being partial. Gradually, however, his jealous thoughts vanished as he realised that what Anna valued in those workers was their unquestioned and selfless devotion to the cause of the Ashram. How was Parvatibai able to make the work of the Ashram her life’s mission? What was the driving force behind Nana Athavale’s action in giving all that he had saved, a lakh of

rupees, to the Ashram? Did not Gangubai leave everything she had to the Ashram? And is there anything Seetabai will not do for the Ashram which gave her a new life? As Professor Mydeo pondered over these things that had come to pass or were happening, he felt ashamed of the petty jealousies he had allowed his mind to entertain for some time. As those petty thoughts vanished, he saw that Anna knew how to value the zeal and devotion of his lieutenants. Anna knew more than this. To none of the workers he gave a word of advice or of admonition. He intervened only when he knew they needed guidance, and such occasions were rare. Thus he gave full scope to independent and individual efforts. He could do this because it was his faith that great things were accomplished even by men and women of limited capacities if they had confidence in themselves. In this way, devoted workers like Professor Mydeo were trained. Thus did they learn to know the real greatness which Anna possessed. It was the greatness of his humility. The compassion of his heart refused to look upon anyone as too low to be his brother or fellow-worker.

If anyone asked Maharshi Karve to tell him something about his contacts with leaders like Bhandarkar, Ranade, Vishnu Shastri Pandit, or Agarkar, he had this answer:

“They were giants. I am only a camp-follower.” This answer would remind one of what John Morley said of John Stuart Mill at whose feet he sat and learnt. “There he was, a great and benignant lamp of wisdom and humanity, and I and others kindled our modest rush-lights at that lamp.” Like Morley, Karve would claim only to have kindled a modest rush-light at the great and benignant lamps lit by earlier reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ranade and Vishnu Shastri Pandit. But that modest rush-light, in due course, became a very bright lamp and it still continues to throw its light far and wide. Yet, the man who kindled it

and held it across the wide span of a hundred and five years would only look upon it as no more than a modest rush-light.

Why did this man always sympathies with those who were neglected and looked down upon by society ? Why did his heart bleed for those whose wounds lay for years and for centuries unattended? What made him regard all problems of social reform and social justice as problems to be tackled and solved with compassion? What furnished the urge for his efforts for the establishment of equality among men? Why was he always reluctant to accept a position of honour even in the institutions founded by him?

To all these questions the answer is the same. It is to be found in his estimate of himself. Having been trained from his boyhood, he learnt to regard himself as a humble worker. Often he condemned his shyness as a shortcoming and sometimes even cursed himself for it, but it is also true that in condemning this he was doing injustice to himself. Throughout his long life he was a stranger to himself, and was not aware of the lofty heights to which his humility had raised him. It enabled him to face misfortunes without complaining and to meet successes, honours and distinctions with indifference.

Dhondo Keshav Karve is remembered in India and even beyond her shores as Maharshi Karve. In the evening of his life, he lived in the midst of the admiration and gratitude of his countrymen who respected him as a Maharshi. The epithet of Maharshi is handed down from ancient times. Even today the Hindu way of life has retained in its philosophy and ideal way of living the teachings and examples of the Rishis of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* who were also yogis. They are summed up in a verse from the *Bhagavadgeeta* which had been one of the beacon-lights of the life of Maharshi Karve.

“He who regards everybody as his own self,

Who makes his own the bliss and sorrow of everybody, is the greatest Yogi." (VI. 32)

Every Hindu accepts this teaching as an ideal. There are many who try to practise it. It is a difficult ideal and only those succeed who seek its realisation not through passive renunciation but through service and through hard and incessant labour. One of those few who have had success in full measure was Maharshi Karve.

If he was asked, "If you had a second life to live, how would you reshape it? What would you avoid or add?"

He answered, "I would live it all over again in the same way without any addition or alteration."

He had this satisfaction in regard to his life and work during the closing years of his life. There was no regret, no yearning for 'might-have-beens' in his *Looking Back*.

Maharshi Karve was not a *sanyasin*. He lived life with full faith in it and enthusiasm for it, and used it for the betterment of all. He always gave and did not receive anything for himself. His life was a continuous endeavour to efface all littleness. Neither failure nor success, neither adversity nor fame, altered its course.

Religion had a supreme place in all his aspirations and efforts. He had been conscious of the fact that "individual efforts on the part of man are so feeble that he cannot achieve anything simply by his own exertions." He has acknowledged his gratitude to the unseen as well as the seen forces which helped him and gave him success. In his *Looking Back* he referred to several turning-points in his life which, he thought were out of the ordinary. The opportunity he had to learn English when he was eighteen; the death of his first wife which led to his second marriage to a widow; the new fields of activity which were opened up as a result of his second marriage; the

invitation from the Fergusson College which made it necessary for him to leave the Maratha High School, the schoolmaster's profession and Bombay and to make Poona his home; the arrival of the pamphlet giving information about the Women's University in Japan; the donation from Sir Vithaldas Thackersey; these and several other events strengthened in him the faith that some hidden power guided his steps and the course of his life.

On religion, morality and philosophy, his views were progressive and were the outcome of incessant mental effort. His long and intimate friendship with Narharpant Joshi helped him in the early years of his life in finding a proper channel for these views. As he said in his autobiography: "Free and independent thinking came to me as a result of Narharpant's friendship and the discussions we used to have on such subjects. As a consequence, those beliefs about God and about sin and virtue which had taken possession of my mind earlier began to recede and gradually vanished."

Did Maharshi Karve believe in God? No, and yes. Throughout his life, he endeavoured to find out if there was a personal God. He was not able to find spiritual solace in the belief that there is a God who dwells apart from the universe, who presides over and controls the destinies of human beings, and who can be propitiated by prayers or offerings. He, however, fixed his faith in a Supreme Being which pervades the universe. The individual should and can strive and be one with that Supreme Being. The ideal a man should fix his eyes on should be so lofty as to make him feel step by step that he is and becoming one with the Supreme Being. Many a time he acknowledged his dependence on a Higher Power for the good things that came to him. In his inaugural address to the Maharashtra Social Conference in 1953, he referred to his

long life as a gift from God. However, he never depended on what men of religious faith would call divine help. Maharshi Karve's life and faith were a notable illustration of a daring truth which a great prelate, Dr. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, once uttered: "It is a great mistake to suppose that God is only, or even chiefly, concerned with religion." Maharshi Karve may not have had a religion but he had a religious spirit. Before the religions of the world came into being, the religious spirit was there in man. It enabled them to purify themselves, to lift themselves and strive to reach the ideal of perfection. This yearning to purify oneself, to lift oneself and to be perfect was the driving force of Maharshi Karve's life. Had it not been for his inveterate aversion for a life of renunciation and mere preaching, he would have adorned the *gadi* of the most venerable of Shankaracharyas. He had the composed, detached mental and moral vision and attitude of a *sanyasin* combined with a desire for restless and endless activity which sought liberation here and now. Men with definite conceptions of religion would prefer to call him a high priest pursuing a secular goal. It was not of much importance to Maharshi Karve whether a man was in the right or in the wrong. He had sympathy and even admiration for those who chose a line of action after careful and independent thinking although he did not approve of that particular line of action or way of thinking. He did not at first approve of all that his eldest son, Professor R. D. Karve, was doing to propagate ideas of birth-control, but he admired the fearlessness with which he propagated them and the devotion with which he stuck to them.

Unlike most old people, he was never weary of life, or of living even when he had completed a century. To younger men who talked of retiring from active life, he said:

"I have lived for a hundred years and still I have never thought of retiring."

He went to the amphitheatre of the Fergusson College on April 18, 1953, his ninety-sixth birthday, to inaugurate the Maharashtra Social Conference. He was happy to be able to have the opportunity of meeting the leaders and workers of a younger generation. His heart was full of grateful memories as he spoke:

"This is a great day for Maharashtra," he began. "The Social Conference which was founded by Justice Ranade had not met for twenty years. We have met here to hold its session for the first time after twenty years. It was my privilege to have seen all those departed leaders whose names have been mentioned in the appeal which was issued in connection with the holding of this Conference. It was my greater privilege still to have seen the work done by most of them. I could even claim some of them as my contemporaries."

His voice became soft with emotion as he spoke of those early giants.

"Those who fought the battles of those early days are all dead. I am the only one left behind—the only surviving representative of a past generation. I have held in my solitary hand the torch of social reform which was lit by them. I am now too old to hold it any longer. I have, therefore, come here to hand it over to you."

He handed over the torch to Justice Gajendragadkar, the President, and the delegates of the Conference with a message. He spoke like the prophets of old but the words which his lips uttered contained a message as new and as fresh as the age in which the Conference was meeting.

"I was born when the struggle of Independence of 1857 was not over," he went on. "My eyes have seen the British power at its zenith and also its last receding steps from this

land. Like you I also have been a witness to the glorious spectacle of India emerging out of her political slavery as a free nation. We are a free nation today, but there is still a gap in our glory of freedom. We have not yet found one thing without which we shall never be able to enjoy the sweetness of freedom. It is social equality."

The Maharshi said nothing about the problems and achievements of the earlier generation to which he belonged. He only spoke of an ideal which appeared to him still far distant. Even the attainment of independence, he confessed, had not taken them nearer that ideal.

"On the contrary," he declared with remorse in his voice, "certain shortcomings which kept us divided even during the British regime but had not gone beyond control then have now become more prominent and more dangerously active."

The audience held their breath as they heard the moving but fierce words.

"Independence was brought to our door by world conditions and by the leader we had in a man of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi, but I would be so daring as to say that it came to us before we earned and deserved it by our own efforts."

He was one of those who did not know how to be jubilant over political emancipation.

"We have political freedom in its fulness and yet we are weak and poor and devoid of moral force. Why are we so? The only answer I find is: because we have totally ruled out social equality, unity and fraternity from our thoughts, aspirations and efforts."

At the Maharashtra Social Conference which he was inaugurating, he made to Maharashtra and to India an appeal which was backed by his own work of the last decade.

“Strive to remove all caste distinctions. Let a term like ‘Harijan’ be a thing of the past. Let there be no inequality between men and women. And let there be a united Maharashtra and a united India. Let the ideal of welfare of all creatures (सर्वभूतहितवाद) preached by our ancient scriptures be our ideal and our call today.”

The Maharshi gave this message to his countrymen in 1953. The words have not lost their poignancy or freshness. The echoes still resound. They are the echoes not only of his words but also of his acts, his endeavours—all that made up his life-story of a hundred and five years.

How would the reader like to leave the hero of this life-story when he lays it down after reading it? Is he tempted to exclaim “One in an age!”? Let him hark before he utters, for the Maharshi would have protested.

“No,” he would have said, “It’s like *anyone in any age.*” Let the reader accept the Maharshi’s own verdict. It would make it easier for him to accept the Maharshi’s life as a pattern for a purpose shaping itself towards the service of any worthy cause or endeavour. He will then: be able to keep the flame lit by the Maharshi burning on.

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